THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

MRS. GERALD'S NIECE.

BY

LADY GEORGIANA FULLERTON,

AUTHOR OF "TOO STRANGE NOT TO BE TRUE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,

Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1869.

All Rights Reserved.

F. BENTLEY AND CO., PRINTERS, SHOE LANE, LONDON.

PR
4708
F7 m
v. 2

CONTENTS.

PAGE

CHAPTER X. 1

CHAPTER XI. 26

PART II.

CHAPTER I. 55

CHAPTER II. 93

CHAPTER III. 130

CHAPTER IV. 151

CHAPTER V. 181

CHAPTER VI. 215

CHAPTER VII. 248

CHAPTER VIII. 278

CHAPTER IX. 305

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/mrsgeraldsniece02full

MRS. GERALD'S NIECE.

CHAPTER X.

Lady Emily's death was followed within a few days by Mr. Pratt's. She had breathed her last on Holy Saturday, and on Low Sunday he expired. Annie was with him during the greater part of the last day of his life. He retained his full consciousness to the end, and made her read to him verses of the Bible and the hymns he had taught her when she was a little child. Once he laid his hand on her head as she was sorrowfully kneeling by his bed-side and said, "Miss Annie, do not give up the Bible whatever you do. When I am dead, take my Bible home with you. 'T has been my comfort for seventy years. Stick to it, my dear child,

and do not listen to human inventions. Never mind about the Church, the Bible is all we want."

As Annie looked at his peaceful face she thought it seemed, indeed, to have been enough for his spiritual wants. Was she right? God only knows! To some gentle, pious souls He conveys graces through the scanty channels of an imperfect faith, when it is sincere and humble. But was it all *she* would ever want? Is the silent page, the voiceless teaching, the sacred but mysterious text, enough to carry a human soul through doubts, fears, and temptations, along the difficult paths of life? Annie thought so then; but she was only on the threshold of life; and, as she walked back across the park on the day of her old friend's death and clasped his last bequest to her heart and looked up at the clear expanse of the moonlit sky, Cowper's lines, which she had been reading a few days before, recurred to her memory:

> "Oh how unlike the complex work of man,
> Heaven's own artless, unencumbered plan;
> No meretricious graces to beguile,
> No clustering ornaments to clog the pile;

Like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity."

She had a vague feeling that they applied to the present subject of her thoughts, that they expressed her sympathy with the simple Protestantism of poor Mr. Pratt's creed over what seemed to her the elaborate details and complicated doctrines of Edgar's favourite system. Whatever might be the merits or the defects of the latter, the simplicity of the former might, perhaps, have been justly compared to the mist which hangs over a glorious view, or the haze which conceals from sight the multitudinous beauties of the starry sky. Do not the admirers of what is called a simple form of religion make the mistake which Madame de Stael speaks of when she says, "Ils prennent le néant pour la profondeur."*

On her return, she found Edgar in the drawing-room at Holmwood. He looked pale and tired; and, after inquiring after her health, and saying kind words about Mr. Pratt and the grief she must feel at the loss of so old a friend, he sank back into an arm-chair with

* They mistake nothingness for depth.

a weary look of fatigue and suffering. He looked still more tired in mind than in body.

"Have you been to Marchbanks to-day?" Annie asked, as she poured out some tea for him and Mrs. Gerald, for they had dined early.

"Yes, I went there this afternoon. The funeral, you know, took place yesterday."

"Yes; it is so sad these two deaths coming so close one upon another. Poor Lady Emily! she is not a person who will be much missed by anybody, except, of course, by dear Ita. How did you find her?"

"She does not say much, but I am sure she suffers. Have you been to her, Annie?"

"Only once this week. All my time has been taken up with Mr. Pratt. Edgar, he died so calmly, so happily; surely any one might be glad to be as good as he was."

"We might any of us be glad to be as good as your poor friend, but this does not imply that we can be content to ignore great truths which he did not discern."

Annie looked up, and said, "Yes, I suppose the knowledge of truth should be our aim. We ought at any price to wish to know the truth. Do not you think so, Aunt Gerald?"

"What are you alluding to, my love? Religious truths?"

"Not those alone. I think we ought to care for truth in everything."

"Of course," Mrs. Gerald replied quickly, but with a vague uneasiness. She thought Annie's manner strange, and did not know what to make of it. She was still more surprised when, after the tea-things were taken away, she got up, and said in a low voice—

"Dearest Aunt, I want to speak with Edgar alone. Shall I go into the library with him, or would you rather go yourself upstairs?"

"I will leave you here," Mrs. Gerald answered, and the cousins remained alone together.

They began by speaking of the arrangements about the funeral, and then Annie asked Edgar how soon he would be able to take possession of the living. He told her that the bishop had kindly offered to make an exception in his favour, and admit him at once to priest's orders. He should have to go for that purpose early the following week to the bishop's palace, and immediately after-

wards he should settle at the Vicarage. He had also seen Lord Carsdale, who had promised, in case he wished to resign the living of Bramblemoor, to give it to Mr. Roland, who would then marry Eliza.

In alluding to that circumstance, Edgar said, "If they were married, Miss Flower could stay with them for a while at least. I know they wish it. It is of the utmost consequence she should not go abroad again at present."

"What is she intending to do?"

"I think she means to go to Mentone."

"I shall speak to her about it?"

"Will you?"

"Yes. I shall go and see her to-morrow."

Annie, after she had said this, got up and went to the writing-table, as if looking for something; she then came back, and with a great effort said, "I wish people spoke the truth to one another. Edgar, I wish I knew something."

Edgar looked at her earnestly, and said, "What?"

"It would be so much better if I knew

the truth. Will you promise me, if I put to you a question, that you will answer it plainly and truly?"

Edgar looked agitated. "You do not suppose, Annie," he said, "that I should not always speak the truth to you or anybody else."

"But there are times when it is difficult to say what is true."

Annie stopped short, and, resting her forehead on her hand and her elbows on the table, did not speak for some time. She felt that it was a most important step she was going to take, unadvised, on her own responsibility. It seemed doubtful whether, after the words she was going to utter, their mutual happiness could ever be what it might still be if she kept silent. At last, in the same position, without raising her head, she said, "Which do you think would make a man happiest—to marry somebody he loved very much, whom he was in love with, and be poor; or one he did not care so much about, who was rich?"

She was surprised at the firmness with which Edgar answered: "It would depend

on the man's character and on the character of the women you are supposing him to choose between."

She did not know how to proceed, but after another pause she said: "Edgar, it is of no use beating about the bush—you must not be angry with me—but tell me really, truly, as honestly as I ask you the question, Would it make you happier to marry Ita than to marry me?"

Edgar turned as pale as death. Could he say *no* with truth? Yes he could say "no," for he should never forgive himself if he said "yes;" and in that case remorse would embitter the rest of his life. "No, dear Annie," he quietly replied, whilst his heart was beating quickly, and his lips quivering.

She suddenly raised her head and looked at him. It was impossible to mistake the expression of misery in his face; and when his eyes met hers, and he tried to smile, she saw the desperate effort it cost him, and exclaimed: "Oh, be sincere with me, Edgar! It is all I ask, all I wish. You know I am not accusing you. God knows, I do not wonder at it . . . ."

"At what, Annie, at what? You are dreaming, you are talking at random. Nothing is changed between us, nothing is different. I love you as I have always loved you."

"Yes, I believe it," she answered sorrowfully. "I believe it, dear Edgar. But you never have and you never will—forgive me, be patient with me, do not interrupt me—you never will love me as you would love Ita, if you did not think it wrong to do so."

"Annie, Annie, how can you, how dare you speak in that way? How dare you have such a thought? What a foolish jealousy!"

"I am not jealous. I wish I was, for then, perhaps, the feeling would pass away, and all might remain between us as before. But you are too truthful, too just to deceive me. Come, Edgar, can you tell me . . . ."

"I can tell you that never has the thought of such a marriage crossed my mind—that I have been true and faithful in my affection for you—that I love you with all my heart, my own dear cousin, my own dearest Annie, my promised wife . . . ."

"Yes; every word you say is true. I

have no doubt of it. But is not this true also? Have you not felt that, had you met Ita before you were engaged to me, she was the woman in all the world you would have liked best? Have you not thought that you would have been very glad if I had been more like her? Does not she think with you, work for you, help you in a way I can never do? Have I not heard you say, Edgar, that it is the greatest blessing in the world when a husband and wife agree about religion, and do I not every day feel more, perhaps never so much as to-day, that we do not and never can agree on some important subjects? Have you not made Ita adopt every one of your ideas whilst I differ from them more and more? Edgar, if you were free, would you not marry Ita?"

"I have never thought of any one as a wife but you, Annie. But if you wish to break off our engagement I ought not to dissuade you from it. I have always felt that it was hardly fair that you should marry your all but penniless cousin when you might have done so much better for yourself, as people say."

Annie looked pained. "It is not kind to put it in that way," she answered, and after a few moments' silence, said: "Edgar, I have perhaps been very foolish. Will you forgive me and forget what I have said to-night?"

"Certainly, dear Annie, though I must own, I wish you had spared me the pain it has given me."

"I do everything clumsily and ill," she thought, when she had left the room. "I said too much and too little. I have caused him suffering and myself too. Nothing is better than it was, a great deal is worse, and the worst of it is that I do not see my way out of it."

A few days after the funeral, Edgar went to the Episcopal Palace at ——, and Annie took the opportunity of his absence to drive over to Marchbanks. She had been turning over in her mind whether she ought or not to invite Ita to Holmwood. It would look very unkind not to do so, but after speaking to Edgar in the way she had done, it had become, to say the least of it, very awkward. She wished she had put off saying anything

to him till she had seen them together at Holmwood. At breakfast, on the morning he had left, Mrs. Gerald had proposed to fix a day for their marriage. Neither of them made any answer, and the subject had dropped. He went away, and she avoided going into her aunt's room, or being alone with her lest she should renew it. However, on her way to Marchbanks she came to the conclusion that it would be, on the whole, well to invite Ita. Perhaps more than anything else this would serve to do away with the effect of what she had said to Edgar.

When Annie's pony-chaise drove up to the entrance door at Marchbanks, she saw Ita sitting under the same tree where they had met and conversed for the first time the year before. It seemed so very long ago, so much had happened since then. She was looking pale and delicate in her deep mourning, and was naturally very much out of spirits. When Annie asked her if she had made any plans, she answered: "Yes, Mr. Hendon is going abroad in about three weeks, and he will take me as far as Mentone; I shall spend a few months there with

some of my friends, and then afterwards I shall settle my plans for the future."

"Have you quite given up that scheme about Sisters of Charity at Bramblemoor?"

"Yes; quite."

"I am glad of it. Those sisterhoods are stupid things."

"I think it is a very beautiful kind of life, but I must go abroad."

"I hope, dear Ita, that you will spend a few days with us before you go. It would give Mrs. Gerald and me so much pleasure."

"Would it?" Ita said, her eyes filling with tears. "I should like it very much."

"Then will you come as soon as you can?"

"Very well, I will. Mr. Hendon is going to London in about ten days, and I was to have remained here alone till I joined him, so I shall be glad to be with you."

Then they talked of other things, and Annie returned home, well satisfied that she had done what was right. Edgar was soon established at the Vicarage. As her old friend had bequeathed to Annie all his furniture and books, there was but little change in the aspect of the old house.

The bee-hives remained as before in sight of the windows, scarcely a chair or a table was moved out of its place, and yet within a very few days it would have been easy to tell that the little abode had passed into other hands. Other prints, other pictures, other books adorned the walls and filled the shelves, displacing the old ones, or throwing them into the shade. Mr. Pratt's old cook stood aghast when she saw a crucifix in her new master's room; rumours of the Popish doings at Bramblemoor had, indeed, reached Holmwood, but anything as bad as that she had never thought to see in dear Mr. Pratt's own bed-room. What a strange superstition it is which has made the picture of our blessed Lord an object of dread and horror to those who think they love Him!

It was on the 15th of May that Ita was to come to Holmwood for a week, on her way to London. The spring was at that moment in all its glory—the leaves quite out, and every tree and shrub, from the horse-chesnut to the white lilac, in full bloom; the garden one blaze of brilliant blossoms; the fields and woods one mass of violets, blue

hyacinths, and cowslips; everything gay, fresh, and sweet—the birds singing their little throats out; the insects like living gems; the butterflies like flying flowers hovering over the gaudy beds, and haunting the sunny nooks of the old-fashioned garden.

As Annie sat on the lawn in the midst of all that fresh loveliness and fragrant beauty, there was a strange, anxious sense in her heart of what that week would bring forth. The last words of Montrose's love song came into her mind :—

> "I'll dare to put it to the touch,
> To win or lose it all."

Yes; to lose all herself—she was willing to accept that issue—but was she to mar Edgar's destiny by visiting upon him her jealous susceptibility of what, if it existed at all, was probably only a transient fancy—no decided preference—no real attachment. She resolved to be calm, to be silent, to watch. She prayed to see the truth, and nothing but the truth. And by her side was another anxious heart also questioning itself; also holding one of those inward courts of justice, where

two sides of a difficult case are argued before the unhappy judge, who is at the same time plaintiff, defendant, and arbiter of a vexed question. Poor Mrs. Gerald, she too was looking to that last visit of Ita's with a nervous apprehension. The sound of carriage-wheels made her start; but the first to arrive, of the little party expected that day, was Eliza Conway. Annie had sent the pony-chaise for her, and she looked as happy as well could be when, a few minutes afterwards, a fly drove up to the door, and her future husband, Mr. Roland, got out of it. They were to be married in a few weeks in London, and then to settle in the tiny parsonage at Bramblemoor. Both had been working very hard in their respective spheres, and living on hopes which were now about to be realized. It was, indeed, one of those moments which do not often occur in the course of a lifetime—to spend several days of well-earned repose in the midst of the beautiful works of God, at the loveliest season of the year; together resting from virtuous labours, together looking forward to a future of usefulness, peace, and happiness. There

was not a cloud, apparently, in that horizon—not one they were conscious of themselves—one there was nevertheless, small as a man's hand as yet, but big with dangers, trials, and blessings they little dreamed of whilst strolling on that green lawn, on which the declining sun was beginning to throw its yellow light and long shadows. They had never met before, except in London, and it seemed strange to Eliza to see Mr. Roland anywhere but in an alley, or a school, or the dingy drawing-room in Bryanston Square. It was pleasant to show him that place she loved so well—to be looking at flowers, running water, and a sunset sky with him whom she knew to be like herself, thanking God, in his heart, for every one of them.

There was nothing romantic in Mr. Roland's appearance. His face was plain, but had that kindliness of expression, which Sir Walter Scott says is like sunshine on an ugly country—it beautifies with its light what would be otherwise uninteresting. His manner, from shyness, was a little awkward; but its perfect simplicity made it almost engaging.

It was not till an hour after Eliza and Mr. Roland had arrived that Mr. Hendon's carriage drove up the avenue, and Ita appeared. There is a singular power in youth to dismiss at times all thought of the future—to think of a few days as of a whole lifetime to come—to live in the present hour as if it was never to end. This was the case that day with Ita. She had been miserable at the thought of leaving England without seeing Edgar again, which at one moment had seemed likely. If Annie had not invited her, she would perhaps have been obliged to go to London with Mr. Hendon; but now she had before her a week in which she could enjoy, and enjoy without self-reproach, the happiness of his society. Had she not been going away for good, she should have thought it wrong to feel this pleasure; she would have questioned if it was right to put herself in the way of seeing him; but now it could not signify, he was not Annie's husband yet. It was not wrong to take this joy, as a dying man tastes for the last time the food which is offered him. It would not be wrong to listen to each of his words and learn them by

heart, so as to carry them away with her to muse upon during a life-long separation. It was a pleasurable suffering, an acceptable anguish to feel to the uttermost the happiness of seeing him—of hearing his every word—and watching his every look with the consciousness that it was all to be for the last time; that memory was henceforward to be her world, and with a week before her she could accept this prospect, and the dreary blank beyond it.

Edgar's emotions were far more complicated. Before Annie had spoken to him, he had kept down with a strong hand the first symptoms of a more than friendly interest in Ita. He had not allowed himself to think it possible he could like her otherwise than was right in his position with regard to Annie. But, ever since the day when she had put to him that fatal question, the whole state of his mind was changed. The thought no longer seemed a sin—it could no longer be crushed like a forbidden thought—it would make itself heard. Her words were ever recurring to him, and with them the doubt whether a woman who really loved him

would ever have put such a question—would have placed before him all the reasons why another would make him happier. His mind was in a turmoil of doubt and anxiety; he wished to do what was right; but his soul was sorely perplexed, and to some persons there is no trial in life to be compared to perplexity. They can do anything if they can feel confident they are doing what is right, or enduring what is inevitable. And this state of uncertainty was, moreover, peculiarly trying to Edgar, at a moment when he felt himself called upon to assume new responsibilities, and perform sacred duties, which more than any others required, he could not but feel it, a calm and even frame of mind. His resolutions to serve God and the Church were perfectly sincere, and he was determined to act rightly at any cost or self-sacrifice; but he had been driven, in some sense, into a position in which he did not see quite clearly the line of duty.

Of all persons in the world, Edgar was the one most to dread an interior conflict, and now unconsciously on a question of

morality, he found himself involved in it. Over and over again, during the last few days, had the question presented itself to him—a question to which no general answer can be given—one which, after all, must be judged by the circumstances of each separate case. "If a man has pledged his faith to a woman, and then becomes aware that, in spite of himself, he cares for another more than he does for her, or at least that his more ardent and tender feelings are all interested in that other person, is he bound, is he right, to marry one who expects and thinks he loves her wholly, solely, and entirely? Is it fidelity or deceit, is it justice or injustice, in such a case, to adhere to a plighted troth?" Edgar would have had no doubt as to the answer in his own case, if, as has already been said, Annie had not spoken to him first. When, before that day, the thought had crossed his mind that Ita would have been, of all women in the world, the one he could have most passionately admired and loved—that she was his ideal of what a clergyman's wife should be, with her deep piety, her gentle submissiveness, her ardent

love of the poor, her sympathy with all that is beautiful, and holy, and great in a life of poverty and self-sacrifice — he indignantly drove such dreams away, even as he would have done had they arisen after his marriage. But Annie's question had broken down the barrier, had changed their position. It had, in fact, transformed a dream into a reality, a shadow into a substance. Now he must more or less deceive, if he was to reassure her—now he must be acting a part. Either he must request her never again to allude to that subject, and then there would be something between their hearts, something they did not speak of, something that would be always to both a painful thought; or else, if she recurred to it again, he must actually deceive her: for, since the day when he could really with truth have told her that the idea of loving and marrying any woman but her had never crossed his mind, the state of the case was changed. The once unconscious inclination had made giant strides. The words, "Should you be happier if you married Ita than if you married me?" were continually in his thoughts. The idea, once

suggested, kept rising before him as a possibility, and the answer which his throbbing heart gave to it was unmistakable. From the moment he allowed himself to think of it, there could be no doubt on the subject. On the one hand there was Annie, handsome, good, devotedly attached to him; and, together with her, wealth, position, and the possession of the place he had always been passionately fond of, and with which all the day-dreams of his life were connected. On the other, there was this nameless girl, with her unknown parentage, her strange history, her friendless position, her comparative poverty; and he did not hesitate, he did not doubt, he was certain that if he could be sure he was not wronging Annie or acting unworthily, he should accept with ecstasy the prospect of foregoing every worldly advantage, and marrying Ita. To have her as his wife in any little parsonage in any obscure village—to see her going in and out of the cottages in her grey gown and straw bonnet —to have her by his side, writing for him, reading with him, saving with him out of their poverty means to build a school or to

erect a new altar for their church—was a vision he dared not dwell upon.

If he had not kept these thoughts at bay, the point must have been decided—his and Annie's fate must have been sealed — not that he felt at all sure that Ita would marry him; that was another thought that sometimes troubled Edgar. It seemed to him mean to adhere to his engagement to Annie just because the result of breaking it off might not lead to his marrying Ita. Sometimes he thought the most honourable course would be to give up Annie and Holmwood and Ita, and seek some employment in the Colonies. Perhaps this was really what struck him as the most proper thing to do under the circumstances, and the prominent idea in his mind when he agreed to Annie's wish that he should come and stay with them during the week that Ita was to spend at Holmwood. It was a bargain he made with his conscience. He should give himself this chance, he should be able now to test his own feelings. He had not seen much of Ita in this kind of life. Perhaps he might find that, after all, his imagination had exagge-

rated the interest he took in her, and that, especially at Holmwood, and in the position he occupied there, as Annie's future husband, the illusion might vanish. He should also be able to observe how far Annie was suspicious or anxious on the subject, and whether much importance should be attached to what she had said. At all events, that week would make things more clear; he should see his way better at the end of it than he did then. If the worst came to the worst, he would go to Australia. In the meantime, he went to Holmwood.

CHAPTER XI.

Nobody would have guessed, during the days which Ita spent at Holmwood, what agitating, or, at any rate, anxious thoughts were occupying the minds of three at least out of the six persons staying there. The elasticity of youth, and its strange power of forgetting the future when the present is agreeable, enabled them, in spite of recent sorrow, melancholy anticipations, and inward struggles, not only to appear, but sometimes to be, in good spirits.

Annie had arranged a variety of drives and excursions for almost every day of Ita's visit, and had particularly begged Edgar to consider this time as one of rest, and made a point he should meet them at least wherever they spent the noontide hours, whether in a pretty farmhouse in a distant part of the

estate, or in a lovely spot in a secluded valley, or at the summit of some hill commanding a fine view. If she had wished to show Ita off to advantage, she could not have hit upon a better expedient, for she was one of those persons who throw a charm over the least little details of life, and find amusement for themselves and others in everything said and done in their presence. She had an original way of looking at subjects, which was as amusing almost as wit, and enjoyed so thoroughly her own enjoyment and that of others, that her gaiety was catching. Foreigners say that English people *s'amusent tristement*, now Ita amused herself *gaiement*, and this makes all the difference on these sort of occasions. She looked particularly pretty, too, sitting amongst the fern-leaves and the heather; she ran so lightly up and down the hills, and did everything so gracefully. Whether she played with a child, patted a dog, or caught up a kitten in her arms, there was always something to look at, to watch, to smile at, to be amused or pleased with in Ita. Now and then a look of sorrow passed over her bright face, like one of the

white clouds in the blue sunshiny sky; but, like that cloud, it soon disappeared, and she was full again of her little jokes and innocent glee. Annie felt, and even the engaged couple, who were staying with her, felt that half their pleasure would have been lost on these days of rest, sunshine, and flowers, if Ita had not been with them. And what did Edgar feel? He did not allow himself to think of the future—whilst she was there, whilst she was before him, he could not fix his thoughts on what was to follow. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," "and the joy thereof," he said to himself; and he made no plans, formed no resolutions, was kind and attentive to Annie, paid no outward attentions to Ita, and often prayed that, whatever he might have to suffer, neither of them might suffer through him.

Mrs. Gerald was restless and sometimes irritable. It annoyed her that, whenever she spoke to Annie of fixing a day for her marriage, she changed the subject. One morning of that week she came into her niece's room, and said in a nervous hurried manner, "Annie, will you be so good as to tell me

what your intentions are about your marriage, because, as my plans depend upon it, I should like to know what you mean to do."

"But does it really signify to you," Annie answered, "whether it is a fortnight or three weeks, or three months, sooner or later?"

"It does signify to me. I shall go abroad as soon as you are married, and I want to know when I can get away."

"Get away!" Annie repeated. "You have never spoken before, Aunt Gerald, of getting away from me."

Mrs. Gerald forced a smile and said, "You have never been married yet, Annie."

"With whom shall you go abroad?"

"I may perhaps join Mr. Hendon and Ita; but I do not want anybody to travel with me."

The blood rushed to Annie's cheeks and her heart beat with violence. She had never been apparently extremely fond of her aunt; children who have been very much spoilt, seldom do love in a tender manner those who have made them idols; but Mrs. Gerald had been devoted to her from her infancy, she was so used to be worshipped by her that the

bare thought of her caring for anybody but herself was new and insupportable. Even Edgar's admiration for Ita had not caused her the jealous pang she felt when her aunt spoke of *getting away from her*, and joining that girl abroad, whom in a transport of anger she felt at that moment as if she could have stabbed. Yes, Annie had those violent impulses; there was no vivacity, but a great deal of violence in her nature. It had not been called forth by anything that had to do with Edgar. She had always thought herself unworthy of him, always had misgivings whether she could make him happy. Though an heiress, though a spoilt child, she had been profoundly humble in her estimate of herself as far as he was concerned. But her aunt, her slave she might have truly said, though the ugly word did not suggest itself, that she should think any one an object in life but herself, that she should wish to go to a distance from her, and not be content to stay within reach in case she should have any occasion for her tenderness or her care: this seemed monstrous, unnatural; and, when Ita's name was uttered, it was like a spark

falling on tinder. "I am not going to hurry on my marriage to please any one," she exclaimed; "and if you wish to go abroad with Ita, you can go. I can take care of myself."

Mrs. Gerald fixed her eyes upon her and sighed deeply. "Annie, Annie," she said after a moment's silence, "My Annie, do not speak in that way; we can none of us take care of ourselves. God help us! He only knows what may happen to any of us. Annie darling, do not be captious, do not play with your own happiness; believe me long engagements are foolish things. Fix the day of your marriage."

Annie was softened; she laid her head on her aunt's shoulder, and said, "Why will you leave me, Aunt Gerald? Nobody will ever love me as you do, and you must not love anybody but me."

Mrs. Gerald burst into tears and threw her arms round her niece, kissing her over and over again with a vehement, passionate fondness; and then, returning to the charge, spoke again about her marriage.

"Well, Aunt Gerald, I cannot fix any-

thing to-day; but I promise you—yes, it is to-day, Friday—this day week I will settle all about it. But I will not let you go abroad."

Mrs. Gerald said, "We shall see about that too on Friday week."

Sunday came, and Edgar preached for the first time in Holmwood Church. His sermon was on the words of the Gospel, "If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out." He spoke well, eloquently, powerfully on the subject which those words suggested. Once or twice his voice faltered a little, or at least Annie fancied it did so, when he said that in the lives of most men and women there was a moment when a decision had to be taken which was likely to influence their fate for time and perhaps for eternity; an hour when there was a hand to be cut off, an eye to be plucked out; and if they lost heart, if they failed and shrunk from the self-inflicted suffering, even should they escape the fires of hell, their earthly destiny would prove but a miserable failure, a hopeless mistake. He said it made him tremble to think how sometimes a whole future of greatness or of shame, of virtue or of crime, turned on one

decision, on one act of a poor, weak, blinded, infatuated human will. How angels and devils must watch with eager hope and fear the debate which goes on in the mind of one who stands, knife in hand, longing and not daring to sever the offending limb which is dragging him down into perdition. He said "temptation" was the grandest thing in the world, because it gave man the opportunity of using the greatest gift of God. That when, in the magnificence of his free will, he flung from him the object on which every passion of his soul was bent, and plucked out of the aching socket the eye dearer to him than life, he became a worthy spectacle for angels and for men, one of the glorious band who have fought and overcome."

"I will be of that number," the preacher felt as he uttered those stirring words, and resolved to crush in his soul every feeling untrue to his plighted troth. "I will be of that number," murmured one of his hearers as she thought of the temptation which had been besetting her of coveting for herself the love which was another's due. She had drunk in the eloquent words Edgar had

uttered; she felt ready to march to the scaffold, if needs be, or to the stake any day. But, in the ardour of self-sacrifice, a thought crossed her mind which caused a terrible reaction in her heroic emotions. A troublesome guardian angel, eager to test their reality, or, may be, an evil spirit, jealous of their continuance, whispered, "Leave Holmwood to-morrow; give up those last three days of dangerous happiness, of inevitable temptation." Alas! the whisper was most unwelcome; the suggestion quelled at once the generous excitement; two or three times in the course of the day the thought recurred, but was met with an offer of compromise. She would not say a word or give a look which her conscience might blame; but why should she leave her friends? why make herself miserable? why not accept the short happiness which could injure no one but herself?

Annie had heard that sermon too. Her cheeks had not flushed, her heart had not beat fast, but it had made an impression on her also. She had been watching, she had been thinking, and every day made her more

certain that Edgar liked Ita, and that she liked him. They had behaved very well, they had talked very little together, and scarcely looked at each other at all. Edgar had been more gentle, kind, and affectionate to herself than he had ever been before; but she had observed his face when Ita was singing, she had seen him start when she passed near him, leave the room suddenly when she came in, and change colour whenever any allusion to her departure was made. Once, when she mentioned some Catholic friends of hers abroad, he had exclaimed in an unguarded manner that it would make him miserable if she went to live with them, and then had seemed confused and grieved at the vehemence with which he had spoken. Annie once thought of consulting Eliza, but her pride could not endure to take another into her confidence on this subject. No, she should act for herself and by herself.

She took a walk alone that Sunday afternoon. Mr. Roland and Eliza had gone in the pony-chaise to Bramblemoor for the afternoon service; Mrs. Gerald she had left lying on her sofa in the bed-room with a

headache; what Ita was doing she did not know: but it did not signify. She felt she must spend some hours alone, she would not go to church again, she would say her prayers in the wood. So when the bell for the afternoon service was ringing, and Edgar had gone across the lawn into the churchyard, she walked to the grove, which went by the name of The Forest, and sitting down on the trunk of a tree, she began to think. Her meditations were singularly matter of fact. A romantic person would have wondered at the uninteresting manner in which she set about planning an act of heroic unselfishness. "It is of no use to think any more about it. He likes her, there can be no doubt of that, and so he must marry her. They will live at the Vicarage, which is almost like Holmwood, and, as I shall never marry, some day he will have this place. I am younger than he is, that is the worst of it; but if he dies before me it will go to his children, and in the meantime I can help them in all sorts of ways. I can new-furnish their house. They can have game and fruit, and all they want from the farm and the garden. It will be

almost as if Holmwood belonged to him. What I want to make Edgar understand is, that I love him and will love him as much as ever I did, and yet that I shall not be a bit unhappy at his marrying Ita. I like to love him in this sort of way better than to be his wife—at least I think so."

Some large tears had gathered in her eyes and were falling on the blue hyacinths with which she had been filling her lap. "If he had liked me as I see he likes Ita, that, I suppose, would have been the greatest happiness of all. I had just an idea of it at the time when it was settled that we were to be married. He used to look so pleased when we were walking up and down the terrace and talking of the future. But next to that what I shall like best is, that he should be happy with her. She always thinks everything he does is right, and never contradicts him. I am not like that; I could never give up my own opinions as she does. Some months ago she thought nothing so dull as the English service, and now she can never go to church often enough. The thing is to find some way of bringing all this about. I

set about it so badly before, and I am always so stupid."

A long fit of musing ensued, during which a few more tears fell from Annie's eyes. Yet it was true that she did not feel very unhappy; at any rate, it was a better sort of unhappiness than the misgivings she had so often felt as to the possibility of making Edgar happy, of being the sort of wife which would suit him.

Four o'clock struck at the stable clock, and she thought the service must be over. She had not said any prayers yet, and she tried to read the Psalms for the day; but her mind wandered very much, and she soon fell again into a brown study. The sound of a footstep made her look round, and she saw Edgar coming towards her. She went to meet him, but said nothing of what was in her mind. He told her that he was going to London the next day, and should not return till the end of the week. She understood at once that he was practising what he had preached in the morning, plucking out the right eye, cutting off the right foot. He smiled and spoke cheerfully; but she felt he was

suffering, and longed with a vehement longing to make him happy, to break through all reserve, to force him to stay. But to Annie nothing was so difficult as to speak; she did not know how to begin, it was so difficult after the way in which her first attempt had failed. So she ended by saying nothing, and, as soon as they reached the house, went up to her room, and did not go as usual to Mrs. Gerald's sitting-room at five o'clock for tea.

At dinner Mr. Roland said to Edgar, "By what train do you go to-morrow?"

"The seven o'clock one," he answered.

"Where are you going?" Mrs. Gerald asked.

"To London."

"And when do you come back?"

"Not till Saturday," he replied.

Ita was to leave Holmwood on the Thursday, and Marchbanks on the Friday. Annie looked at her, and observed that she turned pale. Three whole days she *had* reckoned upon, after that she knew all would be over; but now it seemed more than she could bear. He was doing what she had not had the courage

to do. There was shame as well as sorrow in her heart. She ought to have been the one to go. An intolerable fear crossed her mind that she had let him see that she cared for him, and that he was going in consequence. There was no time now for anything; she should have to say good-bye to him, when the candles were being lighted, and everybody standing near the door. She had meant, before they parted, to ask his advice about many things; to get him, for instance, to give her a list of books. She had hoped to treasure up many a token of the past—those little helps, which soften the sickening pain of separation, which leave something for the heart to rest on till it has become inured to loneliness. Even in the greatest grief, casual circumstances have a strange power of increasing or alleviating suffering; and in some sorrows, those which come from quick feelings and a lively imagination, it is wonderful the difference they make. Ita thought that if she had been able to tell Edgar before they parted that she thanked him for what he had taught her; that all her future life would be influenced by the

advice and the instruction she had received from him; that she would never forget the little church of Bramblemoor, and hoped he would pray for her; and, at the last moment, he could have spoken some kind words to her, and she could have heard him say, just as she was going away, "God bless you," that then her suffering would be tolerable. She had made up her mind to bear such a parting as that. So that it was attended by these alleviations, it seemed as if she could endure it. But now irritation, intense disappointment, nervous dread of having in some way or other committed herself, were rankling in her heart, and putting all gentle, soothing feelings to flight.

When Edgar and Mr. Roland came into the drawing-room, she fancied the former was moving towards her. Partly from fear of seeming to expect it, and partly that she was really afraid of not being able to carry on an ordinary conversation with him, or, if they spoke of more interesting things, to do so in a calm manner, she did not look up but kept her eyes fixed on a book of prints. He sat down almost opposite to her. Mrs. Gerald

was pasting pictures in a scrap-book, and Mr. Roland helping her to cut them out; in another part of the room, Annie and Eliza were playing some sacred music, so that it was almost like being alone with him. He put a little parcel before her, and said, "Will you let me give you this Prayer-book? I hope that wherever you are you will remain in communion of spirit with us."

She thanked him, and then tried to say something about his praying for her, but could not get out the words. She glanced at his present. It was the "Book of Common Prayer." Somehow at that moment she did not feel pleased with it; she wished he had given her some other book, "The Imitation of Christ," or a "Bible," or even "The Christian Year."

Edgar said, after a moment's silence, "Annie will hear from you sometimes."

She did not answer. In spite of all her efforts to restrain them, tears were running down her cheeks. He saw those tears, and his whole countenance changed. His own sufferings he had endured with courage, but her grief made him feel quite beside himself.

He could not remain sitting where he was, and yet could not bring himself to leave the room. He went and sat by Mrs. Gerald, with a face so pale and a look of such misery that there was one other person present who could no longer brook it. "Now for it," Annie said to herself, "God help me. This must not go on."

She got up, and passing by him, said, "Edgar, come to the library. I want to speak to you."

"Will it not do when I come back?" he whispered. Each instant, even of suffering, seemed precious to him. "Would to Heaven," he thought, "she had let me remain here, doing nothing, for this last hour."

But she said, "No, it must be now;" and lighting a candle, she went across the hall into the dark library. He followed her, and stood against the chimney, while she sat down on one of the green leather sofas, and felt glad that the single candle gave so little light.

"Edgar," she said, in a firm voice— "Edgar, we must make an end of this misery. You *must* marry Ita."

"Oh, for God's sake, for pity's sake," he exclaimed, with some violence, "do not begin again about that, to-night, at least. I am ill, Annie. I am not up to another such conversation as we had before on that subject."

"It shall not be another such conversation. Edgar, please understand me. What I mean is that it would be very wrong, very unkind, now not to tell me the truth, to let me stand in the way of your happiness, when the only thing I have wanted all along was to make you happy. I might say that I had made up my mind not to marry you, and so leave you free. But I do not want to do it in that way. I want you to be happy and to let me help you to be happy now at once."

She had stood up and gone near him; and, before he was aware of it, had taken hold of his hand, and gently pressed her lips to it. She had never done this before; when she did it, he felt she was in earnest, and that all was changed in their relative positions.

"I can never marry you," she again repeated. "Our engagement is as much at an end as if it had never existed. But answer me this question—oh, I implore you,

Edgar, do answer me, now that you are free, quite free, as free as if there had never been any question of your marrying *me*, would you, *do* you wish to marry Ita?"

Edgar had never wept since his childhood. It was a new, strange sensation to him—the strong emotion was forcing its way from his heart and shaking his frame with irresistible might. He sank down on the sofa, and burst into tears. Annie sat down by him, and waited till his agitation had subsided.

He said at last, "God is my witness that this has been all against my will; that I have fought, prayed, struggled against it—that this morning when I preached on the duty . . . ." There he broke off. He could not tell Annie that to have kept his troth to her would have been the hardest of sacrifices.

"It was not a sin," she answered. "If it had been a sin, I think God would have given you strength to conquer it. I am glad you did not conquer it, I am indeed. I am speaking the perfect truth. I don't think I should have been happy as your wife, always thinking I did not suit you. But may I, may I tell Ita to-night before she goes to bed that

she need not go away? She looks so pale, poor girl! So very pale and sad."

"Annie, you are too good. It is not right, it cannot be right. You have taken me by surprise. You must think of what other people will think and say."

"I do not care a straw about that; only are you sure you love her, and wish very much to marry her—that you do not mind about her having no family, no birth-place, as it were?"

"Alas! if I did not love her more perhaps than it is right to love anybody, I should not be reproaching myself as I do now for my conduct towards you, dearest, dearest Annie. I did not know till these last days, how much I cared for her. It is too dreadful, too abominable to say this to you."

"No, not at all. That is your mistake. The more you tell me you love her, the happier it makes me. It is a real comfort to me, Edgar."

"Well, I really did not know it, and when I found it out, I was resolved to crush the feeling, to drive it out of my soul; for if it was not exactly a sin, still it was wrong. It

ought never to have been. But I thought to-night she did look very unhappy, and it almost broke my heart."

"And you do not mind about her birth—her being found alone in a boat at sea?"

A faint smile passed over Edgar's face. "If she had been found on a dunghill I should not care."

Those words, and the accent with which they were uttered, put an end to any lingering doubt in Annie's mind as to the degree to which he cared for Ita, and she said, "Then will you let me manage to make her a little bit happy to-night, just enough to cheer her up. I think you had better still go to London as you intended. Telling Aunt Gerald will be the worst part of the business, and I had rather have her to myself."

"I really feel quite bewildered, Annie. It seems so strange, so sudden, so sad in some ways, and as if it could not be right. All we had thought of and looked forward to . . . ." he added, with a sigh.

She looked at him anxiously. "Edgar, will it . . . . I hope it will not be a great trial to you about Holmwood?"

"Oh, dearest Annie, the Vicarage . . . ." He stopped short; he could not tell *her* that with Ita the Vicarage would be a Paradise.

But she guessed what had passed through his mind, and exclaimed, "I am so glad now that you are a clergyman, though I never quite liked it till now. You and Ita will agree so well about everything. She will be, as you know, as High Church as you can wish. It is all so well, so right; it is just what ought to be . . . ."

There was a little nervousness, perhaps, in the way Annie kept reiterating these assurances. She did not seem unhappy, nor did she feel so, whilst under the influence of strong excitement. What had passed was, to a certain extent, a relief; what she had yet to do, a stimulant. The pain was to come afterwards. It was like a wound received in battle, there was no leisure to feel the smart.

Meanwhile, Ita was watching the clock in the drawing-room, and counting the minutes, as the hour advanced, and they did not return. She felt very miserable; it was such unsatisfactory wretchedness, unlike what she

had made up her mind to bear. It seemed so hard that Annie should have taken him away just then, she who was going to be happy with him all her life. She might have supposed that, after working for Edgar and with him, and having been his pupil, so to speak, for so long, she would wish to say a few parting words to him that evening. She did not call to mind then that, when he had tried to speak to her, she had been unable or unwilling to answer him. Now she would have given anything to have seen him sitting again at that table.

At last the door opened, and Annie came in, looking flushed and excited. She went to the tray, and poured out some wine and water, as if she scarcely knew what she was doing.

"Is it not time to go to bed?" she said.

"High time, I think," Mrs. Gerald answered, putting down her brush and shutting up her book.

Ita moved towards the door. She had seen Edgar look into the room and disappear: she thought he was perhaps waiting in the hall or on the stairs to say good-bye,

but he was not anywhere to be seen. She went up to her room with a sick feeling of disappointment, and, throwing herself on the sofa, cried bitterly.

The door opened soon afterwards, and Annie came in. Neither of the two girls could, perhaps, have afterwards stated very exactly what passed between them during the next hour. Annie had said that Ita must not *mind* (her favourite phrase) her saying something very odd. She must tell her that a great change had happened. Ita sat up and looked at her as if she thought any change, as far as she was concerned, must be for the better. The tears were running down her cheeks, but she did not seem conscious of them.

"What change?" she asked, in a low voice.

"I am not going to marry my cousin. We have come to that decision, and I thought you would like to know it to-night from me, before other people are told. No one knows it but he and I."

At the first moment Ita did not feel glad. It had never crossed her mind that, under

any circumstances, she could herself marry Edgar. To live near him, and work for him, was all she had ever looked forward to; and her first idea was that, perhaps, it was a great blow to him that his marriage was broken off. She had a vague misgiving that it might somehow be her fault, and to cause suffering to any one, and to him in particular, was to her nature an intolerable trial.

"Is he unhappy? Has it pained him very much?" she asked, forgetting what a strange question that was to put to Annie.

"No, it is a great relief to both of us," she answered; "it is the best thing that could have happened."

"Whose fault has it been?"

"Nobody's fault."

"But I thought you were so fond of him?"

There was a choking sensation in Annie's throat as she answered, "There is nobody, and there will never be anybody, I shall care for as I do for him; and that is the reason why . . . ." She stopped, and then exclaimed with vehemence, "Oh, Ita, I did not mean to say this; but remember, if he ever asks you

to marry him, if you ever do marry him, you are more bound than any woman ever was to make him happy!"

Annie left the room after this burst of feeling, which threw Ita into a strange agitation, and walked straight to Mrs. Gerald's apartment. As soon as she had shut the door, she said, "I am very sorry for you, Aunt Gerald, because I know it will vex you; but I am not going to marry Edgar, and it is of no use to say anything to me about it."

Mrs. Gerald looked at her quite aghast. "God help us, then," she murmured, and then coldly asked if they had quarrelled.

"No; on the contrary, we are greater friends than ever."

"But then why. . . .?"

"Well, because, though he has tried not —tried, I believe, as hard as possible—he is in love with Ita, and he must marry her."

"No, you cannot, you do not mean that! It is too bad, too dreadful!"

"No, it is not bad, it is not dreadful. What does it signify, if I don't mind? Why should anybody else mind, if I don't? It is my own doing."

Mrs. Gerald's head sank on her breast. She looked the picture of perplexity and woe. Annie's excitement took the shape of anger at what seemed to her an exaggerated manifestation of sorrow on the occasion. She was determined not to be pitied—that was the only thing she could not bear; and Mrs. Gerald was looking at her with a commiseration which irritated her beyond measure.

"Good gracious! Aunt Gerald," she exclaimed, "do not be in such despair. I shall never marry, and Holmwood will still belong to the *Derwents!*" Mrs. Gerald seized Annie's hands, and said with a tremulous energy, "Oh, Annie, Annie, my poor unhappy child, what have you done! You have marred your whole destiny."

"No; and I should not much care if I had. I don't think it signifies so much about being happy. I suppose . . . ." here her voice faltered a little, "I suppose you will not go abroad *now*, Aunt Gerald?"

Mrs. Gerald pressed her lips to her cheek without answering. She seemed hardly able to speak or think—all her plans were overthrown, all her reckonings at fault."

Part II.

CHAPTER I.

About two years and a half had elapsed since the evening when Mrs. Gerald had said to Annie Derwent, "You have marred your own destiny"—since Ita Flower had suddenly passed from the deepest dejection to the most lively anticipations of happiness—and Edgar Derwent found himself tacitly engaged to the portionless girl whom he passionately loved instead of to the rich heiress who, to use her own words, once uttered half in jest, but perhaps with a secret sadness of heart, had let him off marrying her.

Certainly, up to the time we are speaking of, Annie seemed to have attained her object, if that object was to secure her cousin's happiness. From the moment that she had given him up as her husband, and he had married Ita, she had applied herself with an

affectionate solicitude to provide for and increase, by every means in her power, the comforts and enjoyments of their home. She made this her special work. Whilst he was spending his honeymoon by the seaside, the little vicarage house became transformed, by dint of care and expense, into a lovely cottage, furnished in the most comfortable manner. She filled it with the pictures he had always admired most at Holmwood, stored the shelves with his favourite books, and transferred the prettiest flowers from her conservatory to the little greenhouse adjoining Ita's sitting-room.

On the day they were to return, she went to give a last look at everything she had done and arranged. It was on a hot afternoon in July, rather tired with her exertions, she sat down on the lawn to rest, and as her eyes fell on her old friends, poor Mr. Pratt's beehives, the words of his favourite hymn—

> "How doth the little busy bee
> Improve each shining hour"—

came into her mind. She felt a rising in her throat, a wish to cry, she could hardly have said why.

Things affect us in an indirect manner, when we are suffering more than we are quite aware of, or are willing to acknowledge to ourselves. Annie thought her emotion proceeded from the recollection of the dear old man who had been so fond of her, but this was probably not quite the case. The newly-married couple were to arrive at about six o'clock, and she had meant to receive them and enjoy their surprise at the sight of the improvements she had been making. But before the time came she thought better of it.

There were great delicacy and great diffidence in Annie's reserved nature. "No," she said to herself, suddenly rising from the bench under the old horse-chesnut tree—"No, their arrival will be perhaps one of the happiest moments of their lives. Perhaps, if I was here, I should spoil it a little. Edgar might be sorry for me, though he need not. I should have liked to have shown him myself the new bench under the sunset-tree, but it is better not."

She told the housemaid to give her love to Mr. and Mrs. Derwent, and to say that

she would pay them a visit after breakfast the next day.

When Mrs. Gerald saw her darling Annie coming home pale and tired, she felt all sorts of fond tumultuous sensations rising in her heart. She would have liked to express them, but it was seldom possible to show Annie sympathy. She did not like it—and less from her aunt than from any one else. She did venture, however, to kiss her forehead, and to her great surprise Annie looked up in her face and said, "You must not think I mind it, Aunt Gerald." Aunt Gerald felt the tears rushing into her eyes, but turned away that they might not be seen.

Certainly, Annie did not look as if she was a person to be pitied on the following day, when she paid her visit to the Vicarage, and listened to Ita's delighted exclamations about the beauty of everything that had been done for them, and ran about with her from room to room, and then from the lawn to the flower-garden, and from the kitchen-garden to the dairy, explaining, showing and enjoying everything together like two pleased children. Edgar was as delighted as she could have

wished with the position of the new bench. "Dearest Annie," he said, "we sat there last night and watched the sunset, only wishing you had been with us. It was a beautiful sunset, and everything so still and calm, and the view of Holmwood so lovely through that peep in the trees you have made, that we could not help feeling that you had prepared for us a little ready-made Paradise, too fair for this world."

"Well, you must let me take care of your Paradise for you. I mean to be head gardener at the Vicarage, if you please. I know you will both be quite engrossed with parish work, and all that sort of thing, and you will want somebody to look after the flowers. So will you now promise that you will not mind me any more than the boy who works in the garden, and then I shall not mind going in and out, and doing jobs about the place. I mean to be your odd woman."

They laughed and said she should do and be everything she liked; and so she did, and the arrangement proved a very agreeable one to both parties. Edgar and his young wife would not have thought it right to spend

much time or money on ornamental gardening; but Annie had plenty of means and an abundance of leisure, and while they worked amongst the poor and visited the sick, and taught in the school, she built them a conservatory, made a little fountain, clipped the rose trees, planted annuals, opened views, and spent whole hours by herself working in some part or other of their little domain, inspecting the dairy, feeding the chickens, and making herself, as she often remarked, "generally useful." She felt their happiness was her work, and she enjoyed it. Sometimes as she was twining the creepers round the pillars of the verandah—one of her new additions to the little old-fashioned red brick house—she glanced at the study where Edgar was sitting with his pale, grave, thoughtful countenance bent over his books, and Ita by his side writing under his dictation, and now and then raising her earnest eyes to look in his face, while with her pen in hand she waited for the next sentence he would utter. Or she would see them go out arm-in-arm towards the village, and as they passed the orchard where she was busy prun-

ing, she heard Ita's joyous laugh, and watched her light step—the laugh of the happy, the step of the light-hearted. She saw the way in which he leant upon her when he came home tired, for he often walked further than his strength warranted; and perhaps if ever in that generous heart there was the least approach to a feeling of envy, it was then. She liked to see Ita cheering Edgar like a sunbeam, and brightening his life by her sweet childlike merriment; but when he was ill and his wife was nursing him like a ministering angel, and his eyes were following her about with a dependent and wistful expression, then sometimes, just for an instant, there was a little pain in Annie's heart.

But she quickly knew how to drive it away, and raise her own spirits; at one time by buying a new pony-chaise which she insisted on their using, in order not to let her little grey ponies grow too fat for want of exercise; at another, by getting a new lamp made on purpose to spare the sight, or by sending in surreptitiously a particularly comfortable sofa, which Ita was to pretend was for her own use, but on which she was to per-

suade her husband to lie down. She surrounded them with all that wealth could supply of comfort, and beauty, and charm, without appearing to do so in a glaring or obtrusive form. There was a pleasure they were hardly conscious of—their minds being occupied with grave duties and hard work—in the flowers, sunshine, and shade, rippling water and smooth grass, which encircled their little home; and their mutual love, engrossing and necessarily selfish, though not unamiably so, was basking as it were in the atmosphere of peace, of brightness, and of loveliness with which Annie surrounded them.

Nor did she neglect to assist Edgar in any of the objects he had at heart. When he expressed a wish to rebuild the school, and found a small hospital for the sick of the parish, to restore the church, and convert some cottages on the estate into almshouses, she enabled him to carry into effect every one of these schemes. He had only to say that he wanted money for any purpose of that kind, and it was instantly placed at his disposal. But she now never said a word about

religion to him or to Ita. The internal arrangements of the church were transformed according to his views, and she made no remark; flowers and candlesticks were placed on the altar, daily service and chanting introduced, and she said nothing. She always went to church on Sundays, but she did not personally adopt any new practices; if any one alluded to these novelties in her presence, she changed the subject.

Mrs. Gerald did not take much notice of them either, her mind was otherwise engrossed. At first, after Annie's engagement to Edgar had been broken off, she had appeared miserable. When, after a while, by Annie's efforts, his marriage with Ita was brought about, she seemed restless and uneasy; sometimes she talked of going to Italy, but this was a sort of feeble intention not likely to be realized. The fact was that, unless she took any one in her confidence and imparted to them the doubts which had passed through her mind, she could scarcely set on foot any inquiries with the least chance of success; and she reasoned with herself that after all it was not her duty to take any

such steps. She had in good faith accepted Annie as her niece, no one had ever questioned her being Robert Derwent's child. Why should she stir in the matter ?

At a time when Ita was thrown on the world nameless, friendless, and well-nigh portionless, and all the felicities of earth seemed showered on Annie, she had almost resolved to try and discover if the former's extraordinary likeness to her brother's wife was a freak of nature, or whether she was not after all the real Annie. The possibility of it since her last interview with Lady Emily had forced itself on her mind, and it seemed a crime to let her go away like an utter stranger, when all the time perhaps she was Robert's child. She used to look alternately at the two girls—at her own, own Annie, so loved since her earliest years, and then at that other girl with those, to her, terrible, soft brown eyes, so like those of Robert's wife, and feel as if she should go out of her mind with the doubt. The prosperous one was her darling, her idol—for that other poor friendless child, who was perhaps after all the real Annie, she felt a yearning pity, a strange

involuntary attraction. All this seemed reversed at times. All the love of past years fought against the new doubt, and the whole misgiving seemed at moments nothing but a bad dream.

When, however, most unexpectedly Ita Flower became Edgar's wife, Mrs. Gerald's mind was filled with a storm of conflicting feelings. The difficulty became greater than ever of disclosing her doubts, even if she had been almost certain that they were well grounded. After Annie had been supplanted and with the most generous unselfishness had promoted Edgar's marriage with her rival, how could she ever bring herself to endanger her position and prospects. When she saw her employing her fortune in benefiting those who, however innocently, had robbed her of the happiness she had once looked forward to, she could not believe it would be right to take the first step in a course which might end in depriving her of her home. She now dreaded any evidence coming to light on that point. She never drew aside the curtain over Mrs. Derwent's picture; she could not bear to look at the infant in her arms. Still,

supposing by any chance Ita was that infant, she was happy now. She had found in a husband's devoted love more happiness than possessions or fortune could give. Tired of doubts, weary of weighing possibilities, with no new evidence to assist the mental process, Mrs. Gerald became to a certain degree reconciled to let the subject rest even in her own secret thoughts. She persuaded herself that the best course was to remain passive, and shut up in her own breast the knowledge of facts which might disturb the peace of two persons, who already stood in a somewhat strange position with respect to each other. This decision calmed her spirits, and she seemed tolerably happy during those first two years of Edgar's marriage.

Edgar worked as hard at Holmwood as he had done at Bramblemoor, and Ita threw herself heart and soul into all his occupations and pursuits. She very soon won all hearts in the parish. The people liked him, but they doated upon her. She saw a great deal of Eliza, who was now married to Mr. Roland, and settled at Bramblemoor. Common objects of interest made it a pleasure to

meet. There was always something about which to consult the Rolands, or about which to help them. They were poor, and Ita could show them many a little kindness, which was a comfort to them and a joy to herself. Her only trouble in those early days of her marriage was the weakness of Edgar's sight, which rather increased than diminished. He could with difficulty read and write at night, but she was his eyes and his hands, he used to say.

"And your heart, too, Edgar!" she would add, with her bright smile, "your sweetheart, as the old books say. I do not like those pretty words to be used in the way they now are. Nancy Betts told me yesterday that Tom Pike, was her *sweetheart!* Fancy Tom being any one's sweetheart! I could as soon fancy Polly's being his lady love."

"Why, what is your idea of a lady love?" Edgar asked.

She smiled and answered, "A lady loved, I suppose, in a chivalrous manner. With something of worship, in the old sense of the word, mixed up with love. I think old Mr. Sydney's manner to his wife gives one the

idea of that sort of feeling, and her way of enjoying his care and tenderness is so pretty. I think they are such nice people!"

A cloud passed over Edgar's face. The Sydneys were rather a sore subject to him, and the only approach to a quarrel between him and Ita had been about accepting or not an invitation to Grantley Manor. Ita was very confident that there could not be the least objection now to her talking about religion with Mrs. Sydney. What she had said to her at Carsdale before her marriage had indeed made some impression upon her at the time, because then she had no idea how Catholic the Church of England was. Now she was so satisfied and so happy that it could not be bad for her to see Roman Catholics, and Mrs. Sydney had always been very kind to her; she would be sorry not to keep up the acquaintance.

"I have no objection, dearest love, to your doing so," Edgar would reply; "but I particularly hope you will not form an intimate friendship with a person who has abandoned the Church of her baptism."

Ita looked thoughtful. "Is it a duty, Edgar, for people to remain in the Church in which they have been baptized?"

"A very great duty. We owe allegiance to our Spiritual Mother."

"But, Edgar, I believe *I* was baptized by a Roman Catholic priest."

"Conditionally, I suppose; they could not have known whether you had been baptized or not."

"Ah, well; I suppose it was conditionally, as you say; but *if* I had not been baptized before?"

"Yours is an exceptional case; we cannot argue upon it."

"I mean that I owe no more allegiance to one Church than the other."

"If not on that ground, on a thousand others."

"Edgar, did not the Donatists, whom you were writing about last night, baptize people?"

"Yes."

"But then was it not right for them to leave the Church of their baptism?"

"The Donatists were heretics—the An-

glican Church holds all true Catholic doctrine. So the cases are not similar."

"But then it seems to me that it is of no use speaking about the Church of our baptism; that the question is whether the Church in which we were baptized is heretical or not?"

"Of course that is the question; and, as the Church of England is not heretical, any one who has been baptized in that Church has no right to leave it."

"Is the Church of Rome heretical?"

"No; she is full of abuses, but has not fallen into explicit heresy."

"Then if I could ever find out that *that* baptism was my real baptism, I should be obliged to be a Roman Catholic?"

"You never *can* find it out. Besides, there are circumstances which make it a moral obligation for you to belong to the English branch of the Church Catholic."

"I do not want to leave it," Ita said, tenderly pressing her cheek against her husband's shoulder; "you know how I love Ruth's words, 'Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.' There is no

fear of my wishing to be what you are not."

As she took up her pen again, the thought passed through her mind. "But who is it who settles what is heresy and what is not?" She would not, however, begin again to argue. She thought she should submit that question to Eliza the next time they met. She liked talking of these things to her and to Mr. Roland better than to her husband. Edgar had a peremptory though not unkind way of answering her questions; or else he kissed her, or he laughed at what she said; and, if she was gaining the least advantage in the argument, he looked so annoyed that she generally avoided any discussions with him.

In the autumn of the third year of their marriage, Edgar caught a bad cold which left behind it a cough and much languor. His eyes in consequence became still weaker, and the doctors recommended very strongly that he should spend the winter months in the South. He resisted this suggestion at first, but his wife, Annie, Mrs. Gerald, and the Rolands, all pressed him to submit to the verdict, and finally it was settled

that he and Ita should proceed to Mentone, and spend four or five months at the villa, which Lady Emily Hendon had taken there for a number of years. The remainder of the lease had been left to Ita, and her delight was unbounded at the idea of going to Mentone and revisiting the home of her childhood. Nor was she insensible to the pleasure of taking Edgar to a house for the time being her own. There was a little touch of self-complacency about this feeling—it was almost like becoming an heiress too in her way. She loved Annie with all her heart for her great kindness to them, but had perhaps experienced a slight vague regret that all her husband's material comforts were derived from his cousin's generosity. At any rate she was delighted that they were now going to live for a while in *her* villa. Edgar was amused at the consequential, childlike manner in which his little wife talked of *her* lemon-trees and *her* olive yard. She laughed herself at the thought of the fuss which the old gardener and his wife would make with the *padrona*.

Edgar had been to Italy before his mar-

riage, but he had entered it by the Mont Cenis and returned by the St. Gothard. He had, therefore, never travelled along that wonderful coast which lines the Mediterranean with a fringe of matchless beauty—with purple mountains, and green hills, and sunny shores washed by the waves of a lake-like sea; with valleys receding amidst snow-topped heights, fair little towns lying on the edge of the blue waters or crowning the summits of lone rocks; old cities of the middle ages, grim with feudal towers and ruins, but gilded with sunshine; and brightened by orange-trees rising amongst their decaying walls, and encompassing with golden fruitage the fallen grandeur of their palaces, each in smiling majesty adding its peculiar prestige to the surrounding magnificence of earth, sea, and sky.

There is not, perhaps, a greater pleasure on earth than to travel with those we love through scenes new to them, but endeared to us not only by their intrinsic beauty, but also by the poetry of our early recollections. Ita enjoyed to the utmost this delight on the bright sunny December day, when, having

left the winter behind them half-way down the Rhone, and slept one night at Nice, she and Edgar crossed the pass which separates its vale of fruitful gardens from the heights above Villa Franca and St. Hospice. Side by side, in a little open carriage, they went on their way, skirting the cliffs on the Corniche road. She was too excited, too happy to talk! she was afraid of Edgar's missing a single feature of the view—a single effect of light and shade—one glimpse of that glorious scenery. A little exclamation did burst from her lips when they came again in sight of the Mediterranean on the side of the mountain, just beyond the wayside inn sacred to the memory of a French marshal in a cocked hat. It was lying below them like a sheet of molten silver, glittering with that peculiar light which only belongs to southern seas.

"There it is again!" she said; and he answered, "Yes, and more beautiful than ever."

As they advanced, and passed La Turbia and its Roman tower, which in that bleak spot has weathered the storms of thousands

of years, her heart was beating in hushed expectation of what Edgar would say on beholding Monaco and its two promontories, encircling with their smiling banks the little crystal bay and its clear waves. He did say, "How beautiful!" and pressed her hand. She felt then quite happy, and sat anticipating every turn of the road, watching his face, and enjoying his admiration. She was so proud of the blue sea, of the glens and the torrents, of the pines and ilexes, of the grand old gnarled twisted olive-trees, even of the wild heart's-eases by the roadside. Edgar told her that she exulted as vain-gloriously in the beauty of the mountains and the deep colour of the sky, as if she had had a share in their creation.

She coloured, smiled, and said, "No; but I am very glad God made them, and that you admire them." Her heart was full. She did not like him to joke at that moment. He seemed to feel it, and answered in a different tone, "I cannot help thinking, when one sees such magnificent scenery as this, of what St. Augustine says, 'If the prison-house is so beautiful, what will the palace be?'"

"Oh! I only hope," she exclaimed, "that the prison-house is not too beautiful. To see all this again with you is almost too much joy for earth!"

At that moment, about half-way down the winding descent, she cried, "There is Mentone;" and the little gem of the Riviera, with its jutting fort, its graceful Campo Santo on the hill, and its picturesque white churches, appeared for an instant on the edge of the waves, but soon to be hidden again by the hills above Capo Martino."

Edgar turned to his wife, and said, "*Your* Mentone!"

She smiled, and answered, "*My* Mentone; but yonder is my cradle, the only birth-place I know of, that grand wide sea on which I floated so near death, so strangely helpless, so strangely saved!" She laid her head on her husband's shoulder, and added, "Is it not a singular thing to live, and not to know who gave you birth, whence you came, or anything about yourself, except just your own self. It is rather sad."

"I like it," Edgar said, pressing her hand. "I like to feel that you have no tie,

no relatives on earth; that you came straight out of that fair sea; that you belong to nobody but God and me."

"God and him!" Ita repeated to herself the words, "God first, and then him." It was one of those thoughts that at the moment is not much dwelt on, but which seems to sink into the mind and to grow in it.

"Look at that mass of olive woods," Edgar said, "how glorious they are, how unlike the poor stunted olive-trees of Provence—these are real forest-trees; and then those glimpses of the sea between the branches are so lovely. How mild the air is now! What good this climate will do me!"

"I am sure, I am sure it will," Ita joyfully exclaimed.

And now they issued from the shade of the grove which lies at the entrance of Mentone, and entered the beautiful alley of oleanders, leading to the town; on their right the shore of the western bay, with its rippling waves and foaming crests; and on the left a perfect forest of orange and lemon-trees, backed by purple mountains rising one above the other in soft and lovely grandeur.

One hill lower than the rest, and clad in green, drew from Ita the exclamation, "Oh, there is the Annunziata! a chapel which once was a convent. It was one of my favourite walks."

They drove past the inn, the only one then in Mentone, which now boasts of more than a dozen hotels, and on to the other side of the little town and along its eastern bay, till they arrived at Lady Emily Hendon's villa, one of the first which had been built for foreigners. It stood, surrounded by olive woods, in the midst of a garden full of catalpa-trees and roses, which, even in that wintry season, were blossoming in a wilderness of shrubs and flowers. An orange grove stood behind the house, and in front of it a terrace overlooking the sea; but between it and the shore ran the highroad, bordered on each side by oleanders and cactuses.

That scarcely cultivated garden, rich in the natural magnificence of its fruits and flowers, with the picturesque view of Mentone on one side, and the coast as far as Bordighiera on the other, was as lovely a

spot as the imagination can conceive. Edgar was as enchanted as his wife could have desired. They stood on the terrace looking about them till it was dark, and then they could hardly tear themselves away from it, or sit in the house after their dinner, which Antonia had cooked for them, with salutary reminiscences of the sort of plain dishes Lady Emily used to like.

Poor Lady Emily! Ita shed a few tears when she arrived at the villa; and she went and sat a little while in her bed-room, feeling sad. But when she looked out of the window, and saw her husband walking up and down under the ilex-trees, and his eyes met hers with a glad and bright expression, a rush of joy filled her heart. Gratitude for love is so different to gratitude for benefits. Lady Emily was forgotten, and, starting up, she rushed down to join Edgar, and to watch with him the sun disappearing behind the fort, and crimsoning, with a fiery light, the waves, the opposite coast, and the white houses of the promontory of Bordighiera.

An hour or two afterwards they were sitting at the window looking at the stars,

when suddenly Edgar exclaimed, "Good Heaven! Is the town on fire?"

Ita glanced in the direction he was pointing to, and said, "Oh no! I remember it is to-day the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and that is the bonfire on the Piazza San Michele."

The flames rose high, and by their light the façade of the church could be seen. She could almost distinguish the statue of the Archangel, which she used to look at with awe in her childish days, wondering if he would ever draw his half-unsheathed sword. She had asked her nurse if he would ever do so. "Not till the day of judgment," Madalena had answered, and so Ita grew up in the belief that that very angel and sword would enact a part in the world's closing scene.

She was smiling to herself at this reminiscence of her childhood, when Edgar said, "Did you ever see anything like the picturesque effect of the blaze on the old buildings? How pretty the Piazza must be, crowded with people. Come, put on your bonnet, darling, and let us go and see what we can."

She was ready in a minute, and they walked through the olive groves to the ancient gateway at the entrance of the Via Lunga, and down its narrow length to the foot of the fine broad flight of stairs which leads up to the Piazza San Michele. It was densely crowded, but room was made for the strangers. As the bonfire was going out, they followed up the steps, through the narrow archway, the crowd of peasants who were hurrying into the Church of the White Penitents, where the *festa* was kept. Ita felt as if she was dreaming. To be going with Edgar into a Catholic Church made her heart beat with a strange joy.

It is often thrown in the teeth of converts to Catholicism that they always had a leaning to the Church of Rome, that they were always known to have an attraction towards her. Well—let it be granted that the conversion of those who had a repugnance to her forms, who saw no charm in her services, no beauty in her worship, but who yielded to the force of irresistible conviction, is a greater proof of her claims to the submission of dispassionate minds—is it any proof against those claims

that they approved themselves instinctively to other minds and hearts? If a mother had lost her child, would it be a proof that that child was not hers, if before legal proofs of it were laid before him, he had felt his heart yearn towards that mother? If we have been baptized into the Church of Christ, by whatever hands, or in whatever place, is it strange that we should feel our relationship to that Church? That long before conviction, even perhaps before doubts had taken possession of our souls, we should have heard the voice of God speaking to us in faint, low whispers, whenever we approached her altars, and bowed down before the Blessed Sacrament?

If Ita was ever to be a Catholic, her conversion had certainly no chance of being considered as a triumph over dislike and prejudice. From her earliest childhood the word Catholic, the sight of a crucifix, or a picture of the Madonna, a procession passing along the streets greeted by the bowing down of reverent heads, and lowly-bended knees, made her heart beat, and her eyes fill with tears; and she had felt, long before she

believed in the Real Presence, or understood the meaning of the word, that Benediction was a blessing. When, after nearly three years' interval, she found herself with Edgar in the presence of the brilliantly lighted altar, where the priest was about to give that mysterious blessing, it would be difficult to describe her emotion. She was anxious to see if he would kneel. When he did so, and with his face buried in his hands, she rejoiced far too much, perhaps; for this act of worship did not imply what it formerly did, when the recognition of the reality of the divine gift in the Sacrament of the Altar was the harbinger of conversion to the Catholic Church. In Edgar's case it was the necessary result of a theory he was obliged to carry out—the necessary admission that the Church of Rome possessed what his sect in the Anglican Establishment likewise claimed.

Let it not be understood that Ita was at that time positively desiring her husband's conversion to the Catholic Church. Far from it. Had Edgar told her *then* that he had made up his mind to be a Roman Catholic, she would have heard the announcement with

mixed feelings. She had entered with ardour into all he had begun to do at Holmwood; and to Romanize the Church of England, and see it reconciled to the Church of Rome, was the day dream of her life. She had rather vague ideas as to when and how this was to happen. In the meantime, her code was to love everything Catholic—to indulge in all possible Catholic devotions—to sympathize with everything Catholics thought and did—and, as long as she was permitted to do all this, to be a good Anglican. But she could not endure attacks or reflections on the Church of Rome. Then came out the instinctive feelings of the child. Edgar had tried her in this way already, two or three times, since they had been abroad. On these occasions she felt all sorts of rebellious thoughts against the Church of England rising in her mind, and could not always help expressing them, or showing that she only based her allegiance to it on the presumed fact of its union, at least in spirit, with the Roman Catholic Church. One day, when they had passed a picture in a wayside shrine, representing the holy souls in Purgatory

begging for prayers, he had quoted the lines in the "Christian Year" :—

"If thou hast loved in hours of gloom
To dream the dead are near,
And people all the lonely room
With guardian spirits dear,—

"Dream on the soothing dream at will,
The lurid mist is o'er,
That showed the righteous suffering still
Upon th' eternal shore."

She had observed—"I do not see how the departed souls would be the worse for our prayers if they did not need them; whereas, if they wanted that help, and we went on 'dreaming on that soothing dream,' it would be very terrible for them and for us."

"The question is," Edgar replied, "whether that belief is the true one or not."

"Oh! yes—of course—but I have rather given up thinking of that."

"What do you mean, my love?" Edgar exclaimed.

"What I mean is this—if the Church of England is a real Church, and the Church of Rome a real Church, too, then it almost would seem as if there was no such thing as truth."

"How can you speak so, Ita?"

"I mean no such thing as truth that we can be certain about. If a person is obliged to believe in France what the Church teaches him, and in England what the Church teaches him, they cannot both believe the truth. You always speak of Mr. Keble as if he was such a good Churchman, and yet he says things in those beautiful poems of his which go right against what Catholics abroad are taught to believe—in those lines you repeated just now, and those others about the Blessed Sacrament:—

> "'Oh! come to our Communion Feast!
> There present in the heart,
> Not in the hands, th' Eternal Priest,
> Will his true self impart.'"

"We do not take for granted what any individual says, however wise or good he may be; but, as regards the present question, the modern ideas about Purgatory are one of the additions the Church of Rome has made to its faith."

"But, Edgar, if I was a Frenchwoman, if I was living at Paris or Marseilles, I should be obliged to believe in Purgatory. The

Church would then be teaching me an untruth."

"You would not be responsible for any error which you had not the means of discovering. God would not call you to account for the result of the position in which his Providence had placed you."

"But if, either by reading or speaking with an Anglo-Catholic, I was to find out that some of the things the Roman Catholic Church teaches are corrupt additions to the old faith, what should I be obliged to do? Ought I, in that case, to leave the Catholic Church in my country, or to pretend to believe what I did not, or try to believe what might not be true?"

"I do not see, my dearest love, why you should trouble yourself to think how you ought to act in a position in which you will never be placed. You belong to a pure Church, which has retained all the essential and true Catholic doctrines and rejected Roman additions. Therefore no such difficulty exists for you, and it is a waste of time to be discussing how others ought to act and feel under different circumstances."

Ita sighed. It is so painful to get answers which do not meet the want pressing sorely on your soul, which turn instead of confronting the difficulty in your mind. "But if I was to have a thought—you would call it a temptation I know—that the Church of England taught something that was not true, I should be obliged to drive it away. It says, for instance, that the Roman Church has erred . . . ."

"I have explained to you, my love, in what sense that article is understood by many members of our Church. They maintain that it only means that if the Churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred in matters of faith, so has the Church of Rome. For my part, I conceive that the Church of Rome has erred in many respects, though not so as to forfeit its position as a teacher of truth to its children."

"Then you think it teaches them a great deal of truth and a little falsehood?" Edgar made no answer and she went on. "And that is why I said just now, that I do not think much of what is true or what is false. It seems to me more a matter of obedience than

of faith. It seems to be the duty of one person to believe in one way, if he is born at Calais; and another in another way, if he is born at Dover. On one side of the sea a good Catholic must think the Church of England is a branch of Christ's Church, and on the other side a good Catholic must think she is no such thing. And so about many other things too . . . ."

"The humble pious Catholic at Calais, who fulfils all the duties his Church prescribes, and does not trouble his mind to determine difficult abstract points, will not be called to account for the mistakes which his humility and docility may lead him into. We may be sure of that, my love, and I only wish there was amongst us more of that submissive spirit which exists in the Church of Rome."

Ita was going to exclaim, "Oh, but it is so different!" but she felt it was better not to press the argument further. She shut up again in her heart that inexorable problem against which all Anglican arguments break their points—"the absence of authority in the so-called English Church," and avoided for some days all subjects of conversation with

her husband which would have led to discussions of this sort. But it was a great pleasure to her to find that he was willing to pray in Catholic churches as well as to look into them.

On the evening we were speaking of, the music in the Church of the Conception was better than is usually the case at Mentone. The Confraternity of the White Penitents, to whom it belongs, had done their best on that occasion; and, though Edgar thought it too noisy and lively, neither his ears nor his prejudices were greatly shocked. The inside of the church was, however, very hot, and when they hurried out there was a cold breeze blowing from the sea. Edgar had not brought a greatcoat, and Ita was frightened at feeling how cold it had turned. The sunny warmth of a December day had deceived them both. She took off her own shawl, and wanted to insist on wrapping it round his chest and throat.

He said, "Nonsense, darling. Put it on yourself. I insist upon it."

"You make me miserable, Edgar," she said, half crying. "It is dreadfully cold. You will be ill. Now, dearest, do, do."

"Certainly not, my love."

"But, Edgar, you know, it does not signify if I catch cold, and very much if you do."

"Nonsense, nonsense! Come along, we can walk fast."

Ita had been speaking quite aloud in her distress, and was heard by a gentleman who was also coming out of the church. He stepped forward and said, "Will you excuse me, but I know what it is to be taken in by these southern climates at this time of the year. I have a cloak with me which I do not want, for I lodge close by here; may I lend it you?"

Edgar began to thank the stranger and to refuse; but Ita eagerly took hold of the proffered cloak and wrapped it round her struggling husband.

"I am so much obliged to you," she said to the owner. "It is so very kind."

"Where shall we send it back?" Edgar asked, feeling rather cross with his wife. "I am really quite ashamed . . . ."

"To No. 9, Via dei Capucini," answered the stranger. "Any time to-morrow will do. Here is my card."

"Now really, my love, you are too tiresome . . . ."

"No, dear old man, you are too foolish." And so they went home disputing.

When they got home, and looked at the card Edgar had put in his pocket, he read the name of the Reverend Edmund Neville.

"The Reverend Edmund Neville," he said, looking inquiringly at Ita.

She took the card and exclaimed, "I will tell you who he must be. It must be Mrs. Sydney's brother-in-law."

"The priest?"

"Yes, the widower, who became a priest. I heard he was in bad health. I suppose he is spending the winter here."

Edgar said nothing.

CHAPTER II.

After breakfast on the following morning, Edgar said he should carry back the cloak to Mr. Neville's lodgings, and leave his card if he did not find him at home. "I suppose you will not take a walk so early," he said to his wife, who was standing at the door in ecstasies over some pink geraniums on the wall of their villa.

"I should like very much to go out with you," she answered, "but I think I had better devote this morning to the painful business of looking over the papers in poor Lady Emily's bureau. I have got the keys you know."

She hesitated a little and then added, "Mrs. Gerald advised me particularly to look for a paper. . . . about myself, which she said Lady Emily had told her must be here.

It was drawn up at the time she adopted me."

"By all means look for it," Edgar answered, "but I do not expect that you will learn anything more from it than you have heard from Mr. Hendon."

He shaded his eyes with his hand and said, "How overpowering the light is! Whether this climate does me good or not in other ways, I am afraid my sight will suffer from it."

"Only just at first," Ita exclaimed, going up to him. "You know the doctors say that it is general weakness which affects your eyes, and as you grow strong here, they will also get well."

He smiled and kissed her wistful, though bright face. "I have always told you that some day you will have to be my eyes, love. I could still perform my duties with you to write for me and help me."

"It will not come to that," she replied, shaking her head.

"It may, or it may not," he said. "But it is better to be prepared for it."

He went out, and the dazzling view with

all its sunny, glittering beauty did not, at that moment, seem as fair to Ita as it had done just before.

She went slowly upstairs to what had been Lady Emily's bed-room. It was a strange thing, she thought, to open that bureau where she used to see her writing her letters, and settling her accounts, which she did not venture even to approach in former days; and now, with the full freedom and uncontrolled power death gives to survivors, she was about to turn over and investigate its contents. One drawer after another she opened and examined. They contained letters from friends and acquaintances, account-books, receipts, a few drawings, one or two little albums and boxes, advertisements and prospectuses. Nothing of value or of interest.

At last, under the programme of a concert at Nice, and an extract from an old "Times" newspaper, she found an Italian document written in a stiff, legal hand. She soon perceived it was the paper Mrs. Gerald had spoken of. It was drawn up by a notary, and gave an account of the manner in which

she had been picked up at sea in her infancy by the fisherman Giovanni Piombo. He stated that the *bambina* was lying wrapped up in a red shawl at the bottom of an empty boat, which was drifting at the mercy of the waves, between the coast of the Riviera and Corsica, that he had got hold of the boat and taken the *creatura*, whom he found was alive, on board his vessel, and carried her with him to Ajaccio, where some time afterwards he brought her back to his home at Spedaletti, a village on the sea shore between Bordighiera and San Remo. His wife and himself, though *povera gente*, had taken care, for three years, of the chiel, and had her baptized conditionally at their parish church. The certificate of this baptism was in the same cover with Giovanni's statement. Then followed in accordance with the laws of the country, the conditions of Lady Emily Hendon's adoption of the child. It touched Ita to see that the fisherman had stipulated that she was to be brought up a *buona Christiana*. In his simple faith he did not imagine that any one could attach a different sense than he did to those words.

Ita leant her head on her hands and tried to recall as much as she could of those early days of her life. She remembered sitting on Giovanni's knees while he was mending his nets on the shore, and his wife feeding her with *pollenta*. She had also a distinct recollection of the day when she was taken away from their cottage, and the carriage in which she was carried to Mentone. They used, those good people, to see her now and then at the villa, till she was about nine years old. Then the fisherman died, and Genoveva soon afterwards. She had heard Madalena, the woman who took care of her, say that she had got a Mass said for one of her friends who was dead, and so the next time she saw the Abbé Giovanni, she asked him if he would say one for Piombo and his wife. He promised he would, and giving her his blessing, said that God would reward her some day for this little act of charity. She now would see the Abbé and explain to him that her husband and herself were Catholics—Anglo-Catholics—and not at all like Mr. Nilson and Mrs. Greatwell, and some other English people,

who wanted to make the Mentonese Protestants.

Madalena, her old nurse, had always looked on the English clergyman, who lived in a villa near Lady Emily's, as an agent of the devil; for he had told her it was wrong to pray to the Madonna, and to kneel down before the Blessed Sacrament. Ita had caught something of her nurse's feeling on the subject; so that when at the age of seven she was taken for the first time to Mr. Nilson's house to spend an hour in his dining-room while he read through the Anglican Service, and then a sermon, and that, too, on a day when Madalena had promised she should go to San Michele, and kiss the feet of the divino Bambino, who was to be carried round the church for everybody to see Him and to embrace Him, she felt no reverent or amicable feelings towards the minister or the service.

With flushed cheeks and pouting lips, and some unflattering Mentonese expressions of contempt and aversion passing through her mind, she went through the compulsory ordinance; and ever afterwards, throughout

her childhood and early youth, it became her object to escape the Anglican Service, and slip away with Madalena to Mass or Benediction. As Lady Emily did not go to church herself, and really cared very little if Ita went or not to Mr. Nilson's dining-room, her efforts were often attended with success. It was only when, now and then, English friends were staying with them that she had to go as a matter of course to the "Messe des Anglais," as Lady Emily's courier called the Protestant Service.

All this came back very vividly to her mind, and she thought what a different religion it was she had learned from Edgar. She compared the hated dining-room with the churches of Holmwood and Bramblemoor, and the things she remembered hearing from Mr. Nilson with those Edgar and Mr. Roland taught, and painfully tried to recall the theory which accounted for these strange discrepancies between the teachings of those who were all clergymen of the Church of England. She tried to make it clear to her own mind; for it struck her how difficult it would be to make the Abbé Giovanni and her dear friend

in the Via Lunga, la Signora Santa Agnese, understand it.

The sound of steps under the windows roused her from these absorbing thoughts, and an instant afterwards she heard Edgar's voice calling her. She hastily locked up the bureau, ran downstairs, and found, with her husband in the drawing-room, a pale, thin, middle-aged man, whom she recognized at once.

"Mr. Neville," Edgar said, when she came in. "Mrs. Sydney's brother-in-law." She expressed warmly her gratitude about the cloak, and he said, with a smile—

"It was not on the strength of the cloak I ventured to call, but Margaret Sydney told me I might use her name as an introduction."

"Oh yes, of course," Ita exclaimed. "We are so glad to make your acquaintance." She glanced a little anxiously towards her husband, but he did not look displeased or embarrassed, and the visit passed off very well. He even asked Mr. Neville to stay for luncheon, but he said that was too English a meal for him. He breakfasted at twelve, according to the custom of the country.

When he had gone away, Ita said, "How pleasing Mr. Neville is!"

"He looks like a person who has gone through much suffering," Edgar remarked.

"I am so glad you asked him to come and see us again. I was so afraid you would not."

"Why did you think so?"

"Because he became a Roman Catholic —you have such a strong feeling on that subject."

"His case, I consider, rather an exceptional one. There is much that accounts for the step he has taken. You know he concealed his marriage for some time from motives of interest, and made his wife very unhappy. He wanted to constrain her to abandon the Church in which she had been baptized and educated. His remorse afterwards was very great, and she acquired so much influence over him that it was not wonderful that he ended by embracing her religion. This was more than fifteen years ago, I think, at a time when the principles and claims of our Church were far less understood than now, and I look upon his change

very differently than on recent acts of that sort, when men who had owned and served the Church of England as their spiritual mother, have forsaken her and gone over to a hostile camp, not out of ignorance, but from restlessness and impatience."

Perhaps some other day Ita would have been inclined to defend the seceders to Romanism, for whom she felt a secret kindness. She looked upon them as an advanced guard gone on before, whither she hoped eventually to see all those she cared for arrive by means of corporate re-union—a thing often spoken of by Edgar and the Rolands to allay her longing for unity whenever it became at all troublesome; only it threw her rather into despair when they said, "It, would not be then, or for twenty, or for fifty years, perhaps; but that, nevertheless, they were on the way to it."

"But by the time it happens we shall all be dead," she used to urge, and then they said—

"What did that signify? They were sowing, and others would reap."

"But why wait, and die waiting, when we might have now what we are waiting for?"

Then she was gently taxed with impatience; reminded of the beautiful words: "In quietness and confidence shall be thy strength," and advised not to make haste in time of clouds."

These exhortations acted like opiates on her mind, stilling its misgivings without removing them. For a while she acquiesced in the exercise of that unreasoning submission which her husband preached to her. It would have naturally suited her fervent, humble, and gentle spirit, but still the question would rise again, the never-answered imperious, merciless question, which no sophistry can meet and no ingenuity evade, "Whom am I to trust; to whom and to what am I to submit; whether I look up to heaven above or to the earth beneath, where is the voice which can speak audibly to my conscience, and bid me accept any one of the jarring dictates which in discordant multiplicity and endless contradiction, resound from the heights, and issue from the depths of the so-called Church of England? How choose between opposite dogmas? How reconcile irreconcilable precepts?"

However, with the feminine quickness and

tact which she was peculiarly gifted with, Ita felt that it would not be well to take notice of Edgar's happy inconsistency, or on that first day at Mentone to engage in an argument which might excite in him any hostile feelings towards Roman Catholicism, so she abstained from uttering a word in favour of those he called apostates. She was only too glad that he saw extenuating circumstances in the case of Mrs. Sydney's brother-in-law, and could afford to leave undefended the more recent converts.

Many were the loved spots where she was longing to take Edgar. She felt much more disposed to make him acquainted with her favourite views and walks than to take him to visit her friends. She foresaw a certain difficulty in making some of them understand his position. If she told them he was a Protestant clergyman, besides giving him offence by calling him so, she was afraid they would set him down as no better than Mr. Nilson or M. Bercail, the Swiss minister. But if she said he was a priest, they would be horrified at his being married. She would have made up her mind to describe him

simply as an English gentleman, but she had misgivings that he would not submit to this suppression of his sacerdotal character, and would puzzle them by allusions to it. His dress, too, verged on that of a priest, and would attract attention.

So instead of proposing to introduce him to her acquaintances, she asked Edgar on the day but one after their arrival to go with her to the Annunziata, a small chapel on a height above the town, midway between the valley of Turin and that of Cabrol, and below the purple mountains which encircle the white little city, embowered in its groves of golden fruitage. She dearly loved this rustic sanctuary with its evergreens and its pines; its simple images and rude ex votos. Every turn of the steep ascent was familiar to her; every stone where she had been accustomed to rest; every ruined shrine on the roadside where pilgrims, with their beads in hand, once paused and meditated on the mysteries of the rosary. She loved the clear sky, the glimpses of the sea, the fresh sweet air, the sight of the peasants, of the goats, of the flocks, of the patient donkeys, of the bare-

footed children; but what most delighted her was Edgar's intense enjoyment, his enthusiastic admiration of the scenery. In that respect their sympathy was perfect. Both had religious minds, and as they ascended the hill words out of the Psalms seemed to rise naturally to their lips—words of adoration, praise, and love; words that express the deepest, sweetest, and highest emotions of the soul, just as much now as when they first burst from the burning heart of Israel's inspired king. They sang them together while resting on a green bank half way up the ascent, and when they left off singing, Ita gathered the little flowerets within her reach, and pulled them to pieces in order to dive into the wonderful mysteries of beauty concealed within their secret folds. With childlike ecstasy she saw, with the help of Edgar's magnifying-glass, each little speck on the pistil of the arum, the dark monk's-hood expand into a little blossom of exquisite loveliness.

"How bewildering it is," she exclaimed, "to think of the endless amount of beauty scattered over the face of the world, un-

known, unenjoyed by any living being, by men at least. I wonder if the angels enjoy anything on earth, if they see beauty in what seems to us so lovely."

"As our Lord saw beauty in the flowers of the field, why should not angels?"

"Oh, yes; then I hope they do. I am so glad that is mentioned in the gospel." Ita was silent a moment, and then said, "How one would wish to live many lives in one! To have days of boundless length and capabilities to acquire every kind of knowledge! There are openings on all sides, but they seem to close before we have time to appreciate them."

"I suppose we are given those glimpses," Edgar replied, "to lead us higher than this world."

"But even this world we see so little of. How many people I am sure have never looked into the inside of a monk's-hood," Ita said, once more peeping into the secret folds of the dark little plant.

"And some never think of looking up at the starry sky."

"I do not care near so much about the

stars as about the earth. They give me puzzling thoughts, and I hate perplexity."

"You are not patient," Edgar said, laughing. "It is great wisdom to submit to our own inevitable ignorance."

She smiled. "Yes, you are quite right; but I do not like to think of what I cannot understand."

"And yet you are always starting thoughts of that kind — wondering over all sorts of things — just now about the mysterious amount of beauty lavished upon this world, where so few appreciate and enjoy it."

"I was wrong to say that I did not like to think of what I do not understand. It is what perplexes me that I dislike. The two are very different. Perplexity is a distressing feeling, whereas we can admire and adore what we cannot fathom. Indeed, we could hardly adore, I think, what we did quite understand. It would not be enough above us for that."

"But what, then, perplexes you in the stars?"

"Their innumerable number. They fill, and rise, and multiply in the sky, till it gives

me a giddy feeling to look at or think of them."

"But, my foolish darling, are not the waves of the sea and the blades of grass on the earth equally countless?"

"True; but we know more about them. I should not mind if I were sure the stars were only what Milman calls them—'God's lamps enthroned on high.' I do not want to think that they are worlds. Sometimes, however, I fancy that they may be the mansions our Lord speaks of, when He says there are many of them in his Father's house. That is one of the passages in the Bible I often muse over, Edgar. I hope we are sure, you and I, of being in the same mansion."

"You take things very literally, love; but *sure* we cannot be, even of going to heaven."

"No; but we hope it with a feeling very like security. As God is our Father, if we really always do what we think pleases Him, we cannot be afraid."

"No; if we do to the utmost of our power what He requires of us, we shall be saved."

"And we will—we will both always do what we see to be right." She looked up into her husband's face with an earnest, eager, wistful look. "You will, I know you will not find it difficult—you are so brave and so strong. I shall try. I promise you to try." . . . . A sudden thought passed through her mind at that moment. It came like a shot, and thrilled through her heart with something like physical pain. It was the idea that it might happen one day that she and Edgar would not agree as to what was right. The promise she had just made might demand an unexpected fulfilment. She did not think so. She hoped not. It was but the faintest prevision of a possible misery. But it made her silent for a while. She did not mentally retract that promise, but quickly turned away her thoughts from it, and, as she gathered more arums, said, "These brown little monk's-hoods make me think of the Capuchins. Up to the time of the first French Revolution they had a convent at the Annunziata.* I wish they were

* Since the year 1867, the Sons of St. Francis have returned to their ancient abode. One of the descendants

here again! Should not you like to see them in their picturesque habits, ascending and descending this hill, working and praying in this beautiful solitude?"

Edgar smiled, and said, "In the meantime, let us go up to the little chapel."

"And pray that this may happen?"

Edgar did not answer, and they turned into a narrow path close to the spot where the monastery had once stood.

"We are nearly arrived," Ita said, her heart beating with delight. The last scramble was accomplished, and then they stood on the eminence, and at the door of the chapel. Ita pushed it open, and Edgar followed her into the little sanctuary. He took off his hat, and looked about him in the hesitating manner which indicates the inward doubt how much or how little respect ought to be

of the family which purchased it at the time of the French Revolution, M. Charles de Monléon, has restored it to the religious banished from Genoa by the impious Italian Government. The peasantry welcomed them with all the fervent love and simple faith which still dwell in their hearts, and, by gratuitous labour, after their own hard day's work, have helped to rebuild the monastery and to enlarge the little chapel.

paid to a Catholic church by a good Anglican. There was no especial reason even for a Catholic to kneel, for at that time the Blessed Sacrament was not reserved in the little chapel of the Annunziata. But this would not have, perhaps, made any difference. It did not occur to Edgar, nor even always to Ita, to think whether the Real Presence, in which they both in a certain measure or manner believed in, hallowed or not at that moment the place where they were standing. So little do those outside the Church practically realize the truth even of what they profess to hold. She longed very much, however, to kneel down before the crucifix, and to lay at the feet of the Madonna the nosegay of pink heath and large white daisies which she had gathered on her way up the hill. In her careless, uninstructed girlhood, she used to perform these little acts of devotion. She longed to renew them with truer feelings of piety, for she knew more of religion now, and had really begun to try to love and serve God. But as long as Edgar was near her she did not venture to follow the impulse of her heart. She was never sure what he would

think on those occasions, and she was afraid of setting him against entering into Catholic churches, by herself showing what he would consider unreasonable and exaggerated devotion. It was, therefore, a relief to her when he said he would take a walk further up the hill, and asked if she would wait for him in the chapel. She was glad when the door was shut, and she could kneel, or stand, or sit, as she felt inclined, and timidly, like in old days, dip her finger into the holy-water stoop, with a vague feeling of awe and a sense of refreshment in her soul, which the cool drops seemed to symbolize.

She mused on all that had happened to her since she had last stood within those rude but hallowed walls, where so many successive generations had uttered prayers and thanksgivings. A fishing-boat or lemon-laden vessel hardly sails from Mentone, but a Mass is said at the Annunziata, to beg a blessing on its course, and another is offered up in gratitude when it returns. *She* had returned to the home of her childhood laden with new blessings. Her life, which had threatened to be so lonely, had been enriched and gladdened by a great

deep happiness and a priceless love. For more than two years earth had been heaven to her, and her joys had gone on increasing instead of diminishing. "Oh, my God! I thank Thee! I thank Thee with all my heart!" she murmured, with her head resting against the altar rails. She repeated these words three or four times over, but with an unaccountable feeling of depression.

She was not anxious about Edgar's health, though he was very delicate. It had never occurred to her that there was anything really of consequence the matter with him; and there was not a shadow she could see falling on their future, save one, which as yet was too faint, too fitful, too unreal, to obscure in the least degree her happiness; and yet she did not feel quite as she used to do at Holmwood. There she had led a charmed existence. There she had worshipped Edgar peacefully—idolized him without a misgiving, for whatever progress she made in the knowledge of God and religion was identified with her enthusiastic devotion to him. Now a change, slight indeed, but just perceptible, had come over the spirit of her dream; old diffi-

culties which had laid dormant for a time, rose again in her mind, and though met by inward answers which she earnestly tried to consider as conclusive, were not as easily disposed of as she expected. This was perhaps the cause of the cloud which had dimmed for a moment the perfect enjoyment of that happy day amidst the scenes of her youth.

But it passed away when Edgar returned and called her, and they sat under the pine-trees eating their luncheon, which one of Elisa Ferrari's famous donkeys had carried up the hill.

"How I wish Annie was here!" she exclaimed.

"I do not think her appreciation of Mentone would at all come up to your expectations," replied Edgar. "I know nobody less likely to enjoy being abroad."

"No. I suppose she would not be happy away from Holmwood. Dear Annie, she is very matter of fact. But I should not want her—that is, I should not expect her to feel the sort of admiration for this country which I feel, and which I should have been

disappointed if you had not felt. There are persons from whom one does not look for one kind of sympathy, and I think Annie is one of them. She is affectionate and generous beyond anybody in the world, but she would not understand why my feeling about this place is a very peculiar one, and I should never try to explain it to her. I wonder what it comes from, the power of feeling not only for others but with them?"

"Do I possess that power?"

A slight blush rose on Ita's cheek; she smiled, and said, "You like others to sympathize with you . . . ."

"And do I not sympathize with them?"

"In some things you do. But I think men differ from women in that respect, and perhaps it is right it should be so. I always liked that idea of Milton's, that man was made for God alone, and woman for God and man; it seems more natural that we should enter into all your important interests than that you should sympathize in all our . . . ."

"Your what?" Edgar asked, smiling.

"I cannot find the right word; trifling they are not. What shall I say? womanly ones."

"I cannot imagine, dearest love, one care, anxiety, pleasure, or wish of yours which I should not sympathize with."

"Oh yes, I know you would, my own darling; you are to me all tenderness and goodness. Like that beautiful line of Campbell's—

"'A friend to more than human friendship just.'

But the best way in which you can sympathize with me is by always letting me sympathize with you. By letting me have a share in all your thoughts . . . ."

"And yours? do you keep any from me?"

Ita blushed deeply. "Never, but when I think they would pain you."

"How could your thoughts pain me?"

"I think they would sometimes displease you: yours are so positive, so fixed—mine so uncertain, so wavering . . . . But do you know, Edgar, we ought to be going on. We must not forget in this sunshine and these green woods that the days are as short as at home. Will you have another date?"

"No, no, make over the basket and every-

thing in it to your donkey boy, and let us be off."

They started, and Ita said she would guide her husband down the steep descent, for that he had not been used like her to those stony pathways cut in the rock. He laughed at her, but in jest put his arm within hers. When they had gone a little way he stumbled. She turned laughingly, and said, "There, now, without me you would have fallen. You are walking with your eyes shut," she added, surprised. "Why do you do that, Edgar?" she said with a gentle but very sad smile.

"I was practising," he answered, "against the time when you will have to lead me about. I have often thought, Ita, what a good wife you will make to a blind man. You will describe everything to me. It will do almost as well as seeing; and I think I might still perform most of my duties, and be of use as a clergyman, with you to help me."

"I cannot bear to hear you speak in this way. I am sure you will not become blind. It is all fancy, dearest, darling Edgar."

"It is not *all* fancy," he answered,

shading his eyes with his hand. "It is better to be prepared for what may happen; and I want you not to think it would be so bad. With a wife like you, and the perfect union between us of every thought and feeling, *I* should not think it at all an overwhelming calamity."

It was with a feeling she could scarcely have defined, but that made her breathe an irrepressible though inaudible sigh, that Ita heard her husband speak of their complete union of opinion and feeling. She hardly knew whether to be sorry or glad, that he seemed so unconscious that on one subject there was not perfect sympathy between them. He had not then noticed since they had been abroad what she had so keenly felt. How this illustrated what they had talked of a moment before! How sensitive she was to what he had not even noticed! Was she less frank, less sincere than her husband? She who was always reproaching herself for being too impulsive, too eager, too quick to feel and express what she felt. No, she had not been wanting in openness, although she had kept to herself many a misgiving, many a doubt,

which would have angered and grieved him. Nor had he as utterly failed in perceiving her disposition of mind as his words implied. The real fact was that, though he perfectly saw his wife's strong sympathy with Roman Catholicism, he could not apprehend, realize, or conceive that there could be any real danger of her seriously holding different religious opinions from himself. She was so humble and submissive, and, above all, so ardently attached to him, so full of respect and admiration for his talents, that it seemed simply impossible she should ever take a line of her own on the subject.

And as far as natural reasoning went, he was right. But the mistake many people make on this point seems to proceed from their overlooking the fact that faith is a supernatural principle, that each individual soul receives from God graces and lights which it will have personally to give an account of, and that what belongs to its sphere cannot be governed or judged by the same rules which affect mere matters of opinion. Even these cannot always be given up at the will of those we love and look up

to. Humility, however, sometimes inspires doubts which may induce submission. But when once faith exists in a soul, no human consideration can command its surrender. It may indeed die almost unconsciously in the soul at an early stage of its existence under the pressure of outward influences when not courageously resisted. Sometimes it is killed by a deliberate act extorted by others and committed against the cries of a fully awakened conscience, but it cannot follow the ordinary rules of conduct or submit righteously to the influence of affection or the commands of superiors. Its origin is too sacred and its end too divine for even the holiest of human ties to interfere between the soul and God, and to decide if it shall receive or not the gift of its Creator.

Ita was not yet conscious of possessing this faith, and Edgar was perhaps justified in considering her predilection for the Catholic Church at that time as the result of fancies called forth by old associations and imaginative tastes. He remembered all the delight and interest she had taken in his efforts to carry out Church principles at Holmwood and

at Bramblemoor. He had no objection to allow her to expect the eventual union of the two Churches, and he had good reason to hope, if not to feel as certain as he did in his own case, that she would live and die in the Anglican Communion. So many go through the phase of mind she was then experiencing. So many advance even further and draw back. They return to what they and their friends call a calmer, more reasonable, less excited state of mind. God only knows if the germ thus destroyed in their souls was the unhealthy growth of a wayward fancy, or the seed which, if it had fallen not on the roadside or the rock, or among the thorns, but in the good ground of an honest and strong heart, might have brought forth fruits of eternal life.

Ita felt it impossible to say anything in answer to her husband's allusion to the possibility of his going blind. She would not even let him see that it affected her, still less could she at that moment have reminded him that there was not a perfect accordance between them on every point great and small. She disengaged her arm from his, and said

she would not on any account let him walk with his eyes shut. That he was to take care of himself; and she went on before him, skipping from stone to stone, and calling on him to follow as if her heart was as light and her spirits even higher than before he had uttered words, which for more than one reason had damped all the joy she had felt when they began to descend the hill together. Alas! in this world, even in domestic life, how much dissimulation goes on—varying from the worst and the meanest falsehood to the most heroic and generous dissembling, often the highest proof of love that can be given on this earth.

When they reached Mentone and arrived at the end of the Contrada di San Michele, for the names of the streets were not then turned into French, she looked at her watch, and as there was still an hour to spare before dinner-time, she asked Edgar to walk on before her along the shore to the villa, while she called on her old friend the Signora Santa Agnese, commonly called Shia Teresina. Shia is a familiar rendering in Mentonese of the word Madame or Signora, and is only

used in conjunction with the Christian name. She thought it would be unkind to delay longer paying her a visit. He did not object, and she ran up the hill and under the gateway into what was not inappropriately called the Via Lunga.

The entrance of the houses in this street is, generally speaking, most unpromising; but those on the side of the sea afford an agreeable surprise to strangers, who, after ascending steep staircases or descending dark ones, often find themselves in sunny, cheerful rooms, with pretty balconies, overlooking the eastern bay, and facing the picturesque hills opposite Mentone, on the side of Ventimiglia and Bordighiera.

Ita knocked at the heavy, clumsy door she knew so well, and, when it was opened by the Signora Santa Agnese's servant, a joyful burst of recognition followed. "La Signorina Inglese!" Calista cried in a shrill voice, and led the way to the inner chamber, where sat the old lady, whose eyes seemed by far the most conspicuous part of her diminutive person. She was curled up in a corner of what our forefathers called an easy-

chair, but which we should hardly, perhaps, now consider as such. She only occupied half the space intended for its occupant, and the rest was filled up by her work-box, her Prayer-book, and her cat.

"What, figlia mia!" she exclaimed, for Shia Teresina belonged to the old-fashioned Italian society in Mentone, "is that really you?" and she held out her hands, small as those of a child, to Ita, and made her sit down close to her. "And so you are come back at last, Shia Margarita? And not one bit the uglier for your absence! and as fond, I hope, of Mentone as ever? But is it true, figlia mia, that poor Shia Emilia is dead, and that you are married?"

Ita answered the first of these questions with a sigh and a sign of assent, and then said, "Yes; I have been a wife for more than two years."

"Ah, brava!" cried the old lady. "I am glad to hear it. I do not want my friends to follow my example, though I have never wished to marry myself. And your sposo? Is he with you? What a galant uomo he is to have brought you to see us!"

"He is not very strong, and we are come to try if dear, beautiful Mentone will do him good."

"Of course it will. I dare say you have many fine things in your country, but not such sunshine as ours, I suppose; and it is sunshine that brings people to life again. What is your husband's name, Carina?"

"Edgar Derwent," she said, trying hard to give an Italian sound to that very English name.

"Dorante? La Signora Dorante. Very well. And Il Signore Dorante is a good husband, I hope?"

"Oh, the best, the kindest husband in the world!"

"Bravissimo! And are you both good Christians, my child? You used to say that you wished to marry a Catholic, and to be one yourself."

"We are English Catholics; that is, I mean Anglo-Catholics."

"That is right—that is right, figlia mia. There are Catholics of all nations—Italian, French, Spanish, English. It makes no difference, so that they belong to the one

true Church. Deo gratias! and so, my little lamb, you have found your way at last into the true fold! Let me give you a kiss, I am so happy! I always thought you would be a Catholic. I think I shall make you a present of the rosary, which the Holy Father Pope Pius the Seventh blessed for my mother the day he passed through Mentone on his way back to Rome."

La Santa Agnese kept fumbling in a bag by her side, which contained her most precious treasures. Meanwhile, Ita felt very uncomfortable. She could not allow her to believe she was a real Catholic, and accept her present under false pretences. The word *real* had instinctively suggested itself, but she hastened mentally to retract it, and began to explain that she was not a *Roman* Catholic. La Signora Santa Agnese looked at her in astonishment.

"Not a Roman Catholic! But, figlia mia, there is only one holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, and if you do not belong to it, you are not a Catholic at all."

"Oh, yes, we are a branch—a branch of the Catholic Church. It is, I know, very

difficult to understand; but we really are Catholics, not Protestants. I could not bear to be a Protestant."

"Do you acknowledge the Pope," La Santa Agnese asked. She had vague ideas of united Greeks, Arminians, and others who do not follow the Roman rite, and yet belong to the Catholic Church. Perhaps it was this sort of thing her little friend meant. But when Ita said "No, they were not under the Pope," then her face fell, and she slipped back the rosary into her box.

"You are laughing at me, figlia mia. Those who do not acknowledge the Pope are not Catholics. White is white, and black is black. It is a pity—a great pity. God knows how sorry I am; but let us hope you will one day see the truth. I shall never leave off praying for it, for I have always been fond of you, and I am sure God never made you with that sweet face and that good heart of yours without intending to have you with Him in heaven."

Ita had always been afraid of the difficulty she should find in explaining Anglo-Catholicism to her friends at Mentone, and

her heart sank within her at perceiving how hopeless it would be to convince her dear old Shia Teresina of the fact that she and Edgar were Catholics. She evaded the subject for the present, and inquired about various acquaintances. Then as the rosy hue on Bordighiera warned her that the sun was setting, she rose to take leave of the little old lady, who before parting with her, held Ita's pretty face for one moment between her two hands, and looking earnestly into her soft brown eyes, said: "Do you still love the blessed Virgin as you used to do, little Shia Margarita?"

"Yes, I do," Ita answered in a low voice.

"Bravo, figlia mia. I am not afraid then. She will see to you."

CHAPTER III.

Ita came home a little vexed, she did not exactly know with whom or with what, but she never visited on her husband the effects of the clouds that obscured the inward sunshine of her soul. It was not in her nature to make others uncomfortable. She carried almost to a morbid extent the dislike to give others pain, and to suppress all outward marks of discomposure had become with her a settled habit. So she talked all the evening as pleasantly, and read aloud, and planned an excursion for the next day with as much animation as if she had not felt all the time out of spirits, and as far as ever was the case with her a little out of temper. Edgar had been tired with the long ascent to the Annunziata, and said, "We will not go quite so far to-morrow. By the way, I met

Mr. Neville after I left you. He says he will come here to-morrow at two o'clock, and take a walk with us."

Ita did not feel quite as pleased as she would have done the day before at the thought of this visit. There are wayward changes in the feelings of persons in her state of mind. She had resented Mdlle. Santa Agnese's disbelief of a fact that, at the bottom of her heart, she scarcely had faith in herself, and this irritation that her own doubts had thus received a confirmation, gave her for the moment an almost hostile feeling against Roman Catholicism. She felt wounded, as it were, and ill-used by what she loved. It was evident that Roman Catholics utterly scouted the theory which Edgar had anxiously instilled into her mind. She had taken it on trust, and was clinging to it with a determination to think as he did, and a secret dread of anything which would shake that determination.

As she laid down to sleep that night, with the noise in her ears of "the ever-sounding and mysterious main," so strangely loud and ever-sounding on that shore, a

wish came over her that time might stand still for a while. Life was happy then. Would it always continue so? Her religious principles and feelings had been gradually and steadily advancing to a point from which they could never recede without infidelity—to God, and her conscience. They had arisen simultaneously with her first acquaintance with Edgar. They had grown with the growth of a new love and a new happiness. Now a vague fear sometimes crossed her mind whether this earthly happiness and this unearthly faith, which was gaining every day a stronger hold upon her soul, could continue to keep pace with each other. The strength, the demands of that faith, seemed capable of extending beyond all human considerations, and the thought alarmed her sometimes.

The next morning, however, as is so often the case, the vividness of this impression had passed away. The Signora Santa Agnese was a very pious good person, but of course quite ignorant of everything beyond her immediate sphere. It was not to be wondered at that she ignored all Catholicism outside the Church of Rome. The Abbé Giovanni

would very probably take the same view of the subject. He could not know what was going on in England, and would naturally consider as Protestants all those who did not belong to his Church. But it was not impossible that Mr. Neville, though of course he would think it better for everybody to be Roman Catholics, might take a more liberal view of the subject, and understand the position of the Anglican Church. She hoped that he and Edgar would discuss that point.

The day was beautiful—one of those fair bright December days so common on the shores of the Mediterranean. Edgar was looking well, and as Ita was putting on her things she heard him and Edmund Neville talking and laughing on the terrace under her window. She joined them, and they set out to walk to Capo Martino, going through the Contrado San Michele, now the fashionable Rue St. Michel, and then along the pretty picturesque avenue shaded with planes and bordered with oleanders, now alas! fast dying away. They talked as they went along of England, of Holmwood, Grantley Manor,

and Carsdale, of their mutual friends and acquaintances, and the news they had heard of them since they had been abroad. Mr. Neville asked after the Rolands, whom he had met in the autumn at his sister's, and their little girl, Ita's godchild.

"Has Mrs. Gerald been pretty well lately?" he inquired.

"No," Edgar answered. "She is not at all in good health. We tried to persuade her and Annie to join us here, but could not induce them to move. Have you found much benefit from the climate?"

"As much as I ever expected to do," Mr. Neville replied.

"I suppose you overworked yourself in London?"

"People said so, but I believe it would have been just the same if I had done nothing." Then he quickly changed the subject, and began to tell them the names of the mountains which rise precipitously above the orange-gardens and lemon-groves, forming that contrast of grandeur and smilingness which is the peculiar charm of the scenery about Mentone. Even on that winter day

the sun was so hot that they were glad, after passing the little chapel of the Madonna near Carnolès, to turn aside to the left into the olive wood, from which they soon emerged on a picturesque bit of sea coast, full of fragments of rocks and famous for its wild flowers. There on the greensward the first crocuses are always to be found.

Then passing again from sunshine into shade, they strolled through a pine wood to the farthest point of the promontory, where the waves were dashing joyfully and throwing up clouds of spray out of the foaming cavities of the red and grey rocks. From this spot, covered with aromatic plants and odoriferous shrubs, on one side is seen Monaco, and on the other Mentone—miniature Venices: little queens of that bright sea which sometimes looks on a calm day like a vast sheet of ice, with shining pathways intersecting its smooth surface, and leading to distant regions of unexplored beauty.

Ita well remembered the wonderful view from this point. She had been looking forward to Edgar's enjoyment of it, but he kept his eyes fixed on the turf, and she saw

they could not bear the dazzling glitter of the sea.

"My husband's eyes are very weak just now," she said to Mr. Neville.

"Let us go back into the shade," he answered; "the glare is intense just here."

They found pleasant seats on the trunks of some fallen trees, with glimpses of the view through green branches, which Edgar could enjoy.

A little goatherd was watching his flock close to them. Ita gave him some sous, and spoke to him in Mentonese. This led to Edgar's saying, "Are the people here as good as my wife declares them to be?"

"Mrs. Derwent, I think, must know more of them than I do," Mr. Neville replied; "but what I have seen since I have been here inclines me quite to agree with her. They seem a good, honest race of people; moral in their conduct, and very pious."

"There, Edgar, you see Mr. Neville is quite of my opinion. I am so glad. You would not believe me."

"You are so enthusiastic about Mentone

that I suspect you of seeing everything in too favourable a light. The church was very full that night we arrived," Edgar continued, turning to Mr. Neville. "Are the services always so well attended?"

"Yes, I think so. The novena before Christmas will soon begin, and San Michele will be crowded every evening."

"I wish we could go sometimes," Ita said, "but Edgar must not be out late at night."

"I suppose," Edgar said, "that there is much in foreign churches which must scandalize English Roman Catholics."

Ita felt her cheeks flushing, and eagerly looked at Mr. Neville.

"Some of the habits of the people I might perhaps wish to be different," he said; "but on the whole I think there is much more to be admired than shocked at in the aspect of churches abroad."

"It strikes me that the services are carried on in a slovenly manner; prayers gabbled over, and the men and boys who serve at Mass are sometimes so ill-dressed and dirty. The children behave dreadfully too."

"To those who are used to the slow, declamatory manner in which the Anglican Service is read, there seems, I know, something irreverent in repeating prayers in a rapid manner. But I have found by experience that there can be quite as much, and sometimes more devotion in that way of saying them than in the other. I suppose a good deal depends on what we are used to. As to the ragged appearance of the servers at Mass, I own I find no fault with it. On the contrary, I like to see that act of devotion performed by very poor people who have not means to get good clothes, or time to make themselves tidy. As to the children, what can we say for them, Mrs. Derwent? They *are* very troublesome."

"But some of them are so good. I have often seen quite little things come into church by themselves, and say a prayer before the altar, and sometimes making the way of the cross without any one telling them to do it. They do not think it wrong to run up and down the church or smile at each other, as English children would."

"But they ought to think so," Edgar

said, "especially in a Catholic church it seems so strange that irreverence should be tolerated."

"But it is not meant as irreverence, and I do not think it can be called so," Mr. Neville answered. "When our Lord was on earth He would surely have suffered little children to run about and smile in his presence?"

Edgar shook his head and would not admit the parallel. "My wife," he said, "thinks everything perfect here. I must never venture on a criticism. She says immediately it is English prejudice. Are you thinking of going on to Rome, Mr. Neville?"

"No, I must return to London as soon as I can. A very different place from Rome."

"But quite as interesting in another way," Edgar said. "I am not one of those who wish they had lived in other times than our own. I am very glad my lot has been cast in the nineteenth century, and, at this period of it. I suppose that, though on many points we disagree, we both must feel the greatest interest in the revival of Catholicism in England."

"Of course I do. Who could have believed half a century ago what we now see? There is a little book called 'Father Clement,' which was written, I think, between forty and fifty years ago, in which this passage occurs; I quote from memory: 'The Roman Catholic traveller would sigh as he remembered that in Britain his Church is almost forgotten; her places of worship in ruins, or, stripped of the character they once bore, now dedicated to another faith; her services regarded as unmeaning ceremonies. Her doctrines held as too absurd to be professed by rational men, and her claims to infallibility charged as an illiberal accusation of her enemies.' A very few years after these sentences were written, what would the writer have said, if he, or rather she, for I believe it was written by a woman, could have beheld in a vision what is now going on in England?"

"I suppose that at the time you joined the Church of Rome you did not anticipate the wonderful development of Catholicism in our Church?"

"I certainly did not foresee to what an

extent Catholic doctrines and practices would be adopted by Anglicans, or what strenuous efforts they would make to reconcile them with the articles and formularies of the Church of England."

"You would not, perhaps, have abandoned it had you known the great change about to take place amongst us?"

"If anything could have conduced to strengthen my resolution, it would have been that foresight."

"I cannot understand that."

"All that has taken place since I became a Catholic has only served to show me more clearly than ever that there can be only one Visible Church, and the absolute necessity of a living authority in matters of faith. Every revival amongst you of Catholic doctrine, every adoption of Catholic practices, proves to me the perfect consistency of the Roman Catholic Church; and that all she teaches and enjoins is the necessary consequence of the principles laid down by the original promoters of the Catholic movement in your communion."

"I cannot understand that, unless you

assume that we have not the same right to Catholic usages, and, if I must use the word, developments, as yourselves. We maintain just as much as you do that there is only one Visible Church, one Catholic Church, and that it has authority to teach. We say that it is the duty of individuals to submit to her teaching, and that to separate from this one Church is a sin—the sin of schism. I consider these points to be settled and assumed on both sides. The difference between us is not so much in the doctrines, we believe, although we certainly hold you to be in error on several points; but as to the Catholicity of our branch of the one universal Church, we assert that it has preserved the Catholic faith far more free from corruption and additions than the Church of Rome, and that it has a claim, as the English Church, to the obedience of all English persons."

"Don't you think we had better separate the two questions of our supposed corruptions and of your own Catholicity? I hardly see how our faults can make you Catholics. —Now, I know you maintain, in order to make good your theory, that your Church is

one with the Catholic Church all over the world, and on that assumption alone can its claims to authority be established. The fact remains, that she is isolated, condemned, and disowned by the whole of the Catholic Church; and yet you pretend that she belongs to it so thoroughly that you can, as an Anglican, profess to believe in the existence of one Catholic and Apostolical Church, not in the Protestant sense of an invisible union between all who call themselves Christians, but in a *bonâ fide* real visible union."

"But we say that in all essential points, in all that is necessary to salvation, there is a perfect agreement between the Roman and the Anglican branches of the Catholic Church. All that has been everywhere and at all times received as necessary to be believed is taught by the Church of England as by your Church; but the latter has added to the faith, has corrupted its purity and imposed unwarrantable terms of communion. On her the onus of separation lies."

"There again you are going off the point, at least in what you say as to purity of faith.

As to unwarrantable terms of communion, do you mean by speaking of these to acknowledge that you are in schism, but not through your own fault?"

Edgar paused. "There is schism between us, but it is on account of your corruptions, which are imposed on us as terms of communion."

"The Church, then, is no longer really one?"

"It is one invisibly and really, because its parts agree on all necessary points. It is not one outwardly, because we are divided on account of your corruptions."

Ita looked at her husband with trouble in her face. He seemed to have contradicted himself.

Mr. Neville resumed. "So, then, our corruptions are great enough to justify you in schism, but they are not great enough to make any material difference between us?"

"There is a state of schism between us. We have not separated from you, but you from us. The blame lies with those who have corrupted the faith."

"I see," said Mr. Neville, "I must let

you have your own way. So as to these corruptions, then. This brings us back to the question of authority. Who is it that rules the faith to have been corrupted? What tribunal has pronounced on that question? And how many are there even amongst the members of your own party whose witness will be found to agree so as to find a verdict on that head. Who are there amongst you who will exactly agree, and clearly and unanimously state when, where, and to what extent, the Church of Rome has corrupted the faith?"

"We appeal to antiquity—to the Church Catholic before the separation of East and West."

"But if there is no living Church with power to judge and decide on controverted points, there is an end to all authoritative teaching. You appeal to tradition against the witness and guide to tradition; and why may not individuals among yourselves appeal to Scripture against your Church's interpretation of Scripture? and if this is allowed, then there is an end to all belief in a visible teaching Church."

"We hold what antiquity held."

"And how do you ascertain what antiquity did hold?"

"By the unanimous consent of the Fathers."

"But amongst yourselves—I do not even speak of your bishops, or of the majority of your clergy—but amongst your own High Church Puseyite party—can you arrive at a unanimous agreement as to what has been the consent of the Fathers, or as to who are the Fathers whose testimony you are prepared to receive?"

"We can arrive at the conviction that the Fathers would never have sanctioned modern Romish innovations."

"This is at best a negative kind of faith. And will you let me ask you whether your own Church sanctions your interpretation of her articles—whether it does not accuse you of corrupting the faith by human traditions? Do not your bishops, even while they admit that you are the most zealous and hard-working of your clergy, lament the opinions you hold, and deprecate the course you pursue? Forgive me for speaking thus freely.

You know I did not begin this discussion, and should not have thought of plunging into it at the outset of our acquaintance, if you had not yourself led the way to it."

Edgar smiled, and said, "I suppose that when the mind is very much occupied with a particular subject, as is the case with both of us, that it is difficult to be long together before beginning to speak of it. I am not at all afraid of being shaken by your arguments. My conviction of the Catholicity of the Church of England is founded not only on what appears to me sufficient outward evidence, but on the most unmistakable inward experience. But you interrupted yourself just now to apologize for what you were going to say. Pray do not hesitate to express all your thoughts."

"I was going to say that it passes my comprehension how sincere men—and I quite believe you and some others of your way of thinking are sincere—can take upon yourselves the responsibility of teaching people doctrines which, to say the least of it, are ambiguously stated in your formularies, apparently denied in your Articles, and con-

demned by the bishops of the Church you profess yourself to be taught and guided by. How can you tell your parishioners, 'Do not believe what it seems to you the articles of religion in your Prayer-book teach. Believe what we tell you they mean, or rather do not mean. Do not believe your bishop, who says we are wrong. We are right—believe us?"

"Believe us!" Edgar exclaimed. "Believe us, because we teach you what the Catholic Church has always and still teaches all over the world—what has been believed in every age and every part of the Church."

"And how, I say, are they to know, those to whom you say this, that what you tell them is true. You are nothing more than individuals, condemned by the superiors and the majority of your own body, and by the whole of the Roman Catholic Church. You stand alone, acting on your own responsibility, taking for granted, on your own authority, what you assert, assuming a position and maintaining a theory which many amongst you have held only for a comparatively short time. You expect your parishioners to accept, on the one hand, your charges against Pro-

testantism, in opposition to the opinions of your bishops and the great majority of your own communion, and on the other hand your accusations against the Church of Rome, in opposition to the judgment of some of the holiest, wisest, and most learned men the world has ever known; of saints, martyrs, and doctors, teaching one and the same doctrine, and supported by the voices of nearly one thousand living bishops, and the whole of the Catholic world in communion with St. Peter. Is not this enough to make you hesitate to trust in your own views and those of your friends in the Anglican Church? Are you not struck with the fact, that no one takes the same view of your position as yourselves?"

"Some members of your own Church have done so."

"If they do, they cease to be Roman Catholics, though they may call themselves such, and continue to frequent our churches; but you will not find that members of the Greek Church, though themselves divided from the Latin Church, or Protestants of any denomination, or Jews or even Infidels, will allow

you to be Catholics, or understand the theory by which you seek to establish your claim to that position. Then, many amongst yourselves, whose dearest and strongest interest it was to continue to hold it, have felt themselves constrained to abandon it. Does not all this make you doubt, waver, at least, in your reliance on your own impressions on the subject?"

Edgar glanced at his wife. He saw that she was listening with the deepest attention to Mr. Neville's arguments. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes fixed on the ground, but now and then raised to his face when he uttered some of the thoughts which had sometimes passed through her mind. Her husband knew her countenance too well not to perceive that she was deeply interested in the discussion. But he felt so confident of the truth of his own convictions, that, on the whole, he did not regret this opportunity of confuting a Romanist in her presence. Mr. Neville's manner was not offensive. It was earnest and vehement, but neither scornful nor flippant, and he felt an irresistible desire to continue the conversation.

CHAPTER IV.

Instead of directly replying to his opponent's last words, Edgar said, "It is a matter of absolute certainty that we have the Apostolical Succession, and as the Church of England has also the true faith, once for all, delivered to the saints, there is nothing to impair her authority over us, and in her we have the Sacraments and whatever else we need to be saved."

"Hardly whatever else you need to be saved if you have not *unity*. Remember what St. Paul says about all divine gifts if charity be wanting. You *might* have all these things you specify, as I suppose the Donatists had, and yet be lost. You have described an ideal Church, guilty of schism and nothing else. However, though rambling in argument usually leads to nothing, I will

take up your position as you put it; you may have an absolute conviction that you have the Apostolical Succession, but that conviction is not shared by dispassionate persons outside your Church, who have studied the question. As a rule, it is disbelieved by Roman Catholics, and some of your own communion doubt the fact. The most that has ever been conceded by Catholics on that point is, that the case is a doubtful one, because it depends on a number of facts as to which evidence is either wanting or imperfect. Your assertion is, therefore, simply a begging of the question. But, granting that it was ever so true and certain, that fact would not decide the Catholicity of the English Church; again, the question would still remain whether the succession was held in heresy or schism. I suppose you do not hold that a body, having the succession, cannot be heretical or schismatical?"

"Not absolutely; but I do maintain that there is a strong presumption in favour of its orthodoxy, and corroborative evidence is not wanting. The Church of England is a

great fact. It bears the tokens of a work of God, of a step in the course of his Providence for the furtherance of some great design in the world. Its history contains such remarkable evidences of his fostering care and supernatural grace, that I cannot understand how any one can abandon it without running great risk of abandoning Him. I speak as freely to you as you have done to me."

"Of course; we are both in earnest, and cannot be hurt or offended if we each express fully our thoughts."

"Well, if in my opinion this has always been the case, how much more is it so now, when in such a striking way He has moved, and is moving, the minds of men within her, calling them to the knowledge of higher truths, to a sense of deeper wants, to a fuller appreciation of the means of grace? Does not this show that He looks favourably upon her? that He has some work for her to do? Yes. I appeal to you who left us, indeed, before all this was as plain as it is now; can we destroy, as far as in us lies, this work? You have expressed, without

reserve, your opinion of the shortcomings of my Church, and I will not hesitate to state my belief that God is preparing her for the high office of first regenerating our own nation, and then recalling to truth and purity the corrupt Church of the continent."

Ita's face had lighted up when Edgar had spoken of the work of grace in the Church of England; but his last words pained her, and she turned towards Mr. Neville, anxiously looking for his answer.

"It is not enough," he said, when Edgar paused, "to ask these questions, and to take it for granted that a review of the past, and the contemplation of the present, will lead to such conclusions or justify such hopes. I can assure you that, for my own part, such a review and such a contemplation convince me more than anything else of the utter fallacy of your expectations. Reading the signs of the times, and the history of the past in the light of the present, I cannot help seeing in them the very contrary lessons to those by which Anglicans would dissuade people from leaving the English Church. I believe the

recent movement in the heart of members of that Church, at a time when the voice of Catholics scarcely ever reached their ears, has been a call from God to rise up and return to their true mother, and their true home. I am convinced that the strange rise and sudden spread of Catholic ideas amongst us is intended to prepare the way for the reception of the Catholic system in the only way in which it really can and does exist. It has been, as it were, a clue dropped at our feet to guide us out of a labyrinth of difficulties into the plain path of truth."

"Your view of the subject, and mine," Edgar replied, "certainly proves how possible it is for two persons to draw contradictory deductions from the same fact. But, after all, the internal evidence is to those who possess it more conclusive than any external argument; and our blessed Lord has so spoken to us in and through the Sacraments of our Church, that He has, as it were, told us that He is there of a certainty. Ita, you are no theologian, but I am sure you will confirm what I assert: Have we not unmistakable evidence that, in Holy Communion,

for instance, we receive graces which we should feel it blasphemy to deny?"

"Oh yes! whatever else we might doubt about, we could never deny that," Ita exclaimed. She was glad Edgar had appealed to her on a point on which she could give the answer he expected.

"But neither I nor any one else would ask you to deny it," Mr. Neville said. "The reality of Sacraments is one thing, the reality of grace another. It is commonly taught by theologians that spiritual communion, that is, an ardent desire to receive the Blessed Sacrament, confers grace sometimes equal in degree to what might have been received by sacramental communion. In the case of devout Greeks and Anglicans who approach to receive their respective communions, ignorant of the schismatical or heretical character of their respective churches, and with a real faith and ardent desire to receive our Lord, we should hope that the Greek would receive grace through sacramental participation of the Holy Eucharist actually present on the Greek altars, and the Anglican through desire of the Sacrament as if our

Lord were to say, 'According to thy faith so be it done to thee.' I suppose you would urge Dissenters in England to join your Church, as you say that not to obey her is to incur the sin of schism?"

"Certainly."

"Well then, might they not give just the same answer to you as you give to me? That they are sure that our Lord is with them with his grace where they are. And should you wish or be able to deny it?"

"No, so long as they do not see the guilt of the state in which they find themselves."

"Exactly; and that then is the answer which the Catholic Church makes to you. In answering her you use the answer which the Dissenter makes to you, and in answering the Dissenter you use the answer which the Church makes to you. You see the question cannot be settled by inward experience; it is one of fact. God is very good to all who are in good faith. But when once a Greek or an Anglican had come to see the true constitution of the Church and the untenability of the position claimed by his com-

munion, he could not then on any account delay his submission to the Church of Rome, because, being no longer in good faith, the stream of sanctifying grace would have ceased to flow for him."

Ita was listening with her head resting on her hands. At that moment the thought crossed her mind how at one time, especially during the winter before her marriage, the reception of the Sacraments in the Anglican Church had seemed to convey more grace to her soul than had been subsequently the case. Was it that, in those days, she accepted in perfect good faith the teaching which since she had felt it impossible altogether to accept? Were those doubts sins, on account of which grace had been withdrawn? or, on the other hand, was she resisting grace by turning practically a deaf ear to them?

This is the perplexing question which presents itself in so harassing a manner to many members of the Anglican communion, when they begin to feel misgivings as to the truth of what at one time they fully believed. To one as ignorant about religion as Ita was when she first made acquaintance with Edgar,

the Anglican theory offered no difficulties. She had not hesitated to accept whatever he taught her with humble docility and eager sympathy. Since her marriage she had heard, read, and thought a great deal. The controversies carried on in Church newspapers and magazines, and her husband's extensive correspondence with members of the High Church party, had necessarily made her acquainted with the view which those outside the English communion took of its claims to be a branch of the Catholic Church and a teacher of truth, and also with the innumerable differences of opinion existing on important points, even amongst Edgar's own friends and members of his own school and party. The way in which some of them spoke of their bishops; the evasions and shifts they resorted to in order to reconcile the teaching of Catholic doctrines and the observances resulting from them with the prohibitions of ecclesiastical superiors; the use of certain expressions to disguise the obvious meaning of certain practices, pained and distressed her simple, frank, and loving nature: and whether it was that her increasing

sense of this inconsistency dried up the spring of devotion in her heart, or that she was unfaithful to the new light dawning in her soul, certain it was that as time went on she derived less and less benefit from Anglican ordinances.

What Edmund Neville had said awakened also a second thought still more startling than the first. In her passionate love for her husband she had sometimes had a daring, reckless—if we did not hope that God looks with pity on the wild impulses of human affection, we should add an impious—feeling, that she had rather as it were take her chance of salvation with Edgar than separate herself from him in this world and the next. Now the idea for the first time powerfully struck her that he might be in perfect good faith, and consequently safe in his present position, whereas she might be running the risk of losing her own soul by stifling the voice of God calling her to the true Church. If she and Edgar were both to die that night, and appear at the judgment seat of Christ, perhaps he would be acquitted even if he had been in error on account of his sincerity, and

she . . . . how was it with her? Was she so entirely convinced of all she had been trying hard to believe as to the Catholicity of the English Church, so sure that the handful of men in that Church who held it were right, and the whole Catholic world who denied it, wrong, that she could plead conviction on that point at the supreme tribunal of God, where every heart is laid open and no sophistry will avail. There was a time when she could have done so, but conscience whispered that that time was past . . . . She was so absorbed in these reflections that for a few minutes she lost the thread of the conversation going on between Edgar and Edmund Neville. Her attention was roused by the emphatic manner in which the former exclaimed: "But the unbending theory of Rome cannot be reconciled with existing facts. You assert that those who are not in communion with your Church form no part of the visible Catholic Church, and yet you cannot deny that graces from Christ and visible good works, which are the fruits of grace, are found outside the unity of the Roman Church."

"We are quite ready to admit this, as I have already said," Mr. Neville answered, "whenever the facts can be proved, and we fully admit many of the alleged facts, but this falls in completely with the doctrine of the Church concerning the visible and the invisible Church. St. Augustine has summed up all we could say on this point in his distinction between the soul and body of the Church, expressing his hope that at the last day many will be found to have belonged to the invisible Church who never formed part of the visible children, will be judged for their own personal participation in heresy or schism not for the heresy or schism of their fathers. If they have been validly baptized they have been regenerated in the Christ and united to the soul of the Church, and they continue so till by their own act they knowingly and wilfully reject the truth and unity of the Church."

"You do then admit the fact that in the Church of England the Holy Ghost works with undeniable grace and efficacy?"

"I admit it just in the same way as I believe He does wherever men of good will and in good faith, according to the light given

to them, seek to serve and please God with humble and sincere hearts. But you must excuse me if I consider that the Pasteur Oberlin, for instance, or any good Presbyterian or Methodist, is just as likely to belong to the soul of the Catholic Church as the members of the Anglican communion."

"It would be the greatest of calamities to me," Edgar replied, "if—which you have not yet done—you could succeed in shaking my faith in the Catholicity of our Church, because I must plainly tell you that it would be an impossibility for me to join the Church of Rome."

"And why so?"

"Because it would involve straining my conscience to believe what I know to be false, and, moreover, which I know that not only the Primitive but the Medieval Church knew to be so. The English Church, no doubt, teaches three or four Catholic doctrines less clearly and plainly than could be wished; it teaches them indistinctly, if you will, but still it does teach them. On the other hand, Rome now forces on us three or four doctrines which St. Bernard, St. Thomas of Aquinas,

and St. Bonaventure would have thought blasphemous. How then can I do otherwise than stay where I am ?"

"Will you tell me what the doctrines are to which you refer ?"

"The Roman Church gives communion to the laity under one kind only. Those who leave the Anglican Church to join it, renounce half the sacrament instituted by our Lord; give up the privilege of receiving the precious blood, and exchange a perfect for a mutilated ordinance."

"But do you mean to say that the giving the Communion in our kind to all but the celebrant, is a doctrine which St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure would have called blasphemous ? It is not a doctrine but a practice, involving, if you like, a precious doctrine, which both of these saints believed, and which perhaps *you* do not deny. St. Thomas in the 'Lauda Sion,' expresses it in these words,

'Manet tamen Christus totus
Sub utraque specie.'"

"I might, however, content myself with replying that on this point, like on all others,

the real question at issue is, whether the Church of God, the pillar and ground of truth, has authority or not to decide whether any change in the form of administering a sacrament maims it in any substantial particular or not. I grant you that communion in both kinds was the usual primitive practice, though even then communion under the form of wine only was given to newly-baptized infants—and communion under the form of bread only was permitted to be carried from the churches by lay persons, to adore and communicate themselves with in secret in the days of persecution."

"I know that perfectly well," Edgar interrupted. "But why, when there is no necessity for denying the cup to the laity, was the practice enjoined which had been resorted to in the early ages of the Church only in cases of necessity?"

"So now it comes down to this, that what you first call blasphemous doctrine is a practice which may be justified by necessity, but as to which, in the present case, you do not see the necessity. It became a general custom in the Western Church, and the Church

having always held that although both kinds were essential to the sacrifice, either kind alone sufficed for communion tolerated the usage. In the course of time what had been permitted became enjoined, partly because it is much more difficult to guard against accidents in giving communion to a large number of persons under the form of wine than under the form of bread, and that it became a very serious difficulty in times when there was little commercial intercourse between one country and another, to provide sufficient wine for the communions of whole populations; whereas, wheat is a product of every region, and partly as a protest against the erroneous belief that in receiving under one kind only, we do not receive Christ as He is in heaven, our living and glorified Lord. His soul, his body, and his blood united inseparably with one another, and with his divinity."

"Still I do not see how you reconcile this mutilation of the Sacrament with our Lord's words in the gospel."

"I must again remind you that you are not speaking of mere difficulties as to which

you are not clear, but of doctrines and practices which so revolt your conscience, that they are of themselves sufficient to prevent your acceptance of the authority of the Church which insists on them. Suppose the Anglican Church had retained the practice as to this matter which it found at the Reformation, would you on that account refuse to belong to her?"

Ita was inclined to say, "I wish it had," for she had been very much shocked, both in England and abroad, by the way in which she had seen the chalice handled at the Anglican communion. She checked herself, however, and, as Edgar did not reply, Mr. Neville continued:—

"I suppose, by the words of the gospel, you mean those of institution. I could answer that we do perfectly reconcile this practice with our Lord's words, seeing that we apply his commandment to the institution of the Sacrifice of the Mass, in which the priest must receive in both kinds. But let me ask you, do you not give up your own principles when you advance in argument the apparent meaning—that is, what appears to

you the apparent meaning—of a text of Scripture in opposition to the decisions of the Church? If you use this method of reasoning, Dissenters may, on the same grounds, reject every Catholic doctrine. There is not a single one which has not been controverted by some sect or other, on the ground of their own interpretation of some words of the Bible."

"Well, it was rather in a corroborative than a positive manner that I supported what I hold to be true Catholic doctrine, by a reference to the text of Scripture."

"Will you let me ask you this question, Mr. Derwent—Do you believe, or not, that when Catholics . . . ."

"Roman Catholics?" Edgar interrupted.

Mr. Neville smiled. "I glory in the name of Roman; but when I use it I must add the protest, that I consider no one as a Catholic who is not a Roman Catholic. Do you believe, or not, that when Roman Catholics go to communion they receive Christ our Lord whole and undivided?"

Mr. Derwent hesitated. "I do not wish to decide," he said, after a pause, "how far or not this may be the case."

"But surely," Mr. Neville exclaimed, "if you impugn the doctrine of the Church on this point, you should have a clear and decided belief on this subject. Just now you gave this as an instance of a doctrine that would prevent you in any case from becoming a Catholic."

"I have a settled conviction that it must be a loss to members of your communion not to receive under both kinds; but this is but one of the difficulties I spoke of just now. Your modern idea of Purgatory, for instance, is most repulsive, and not at all in accordance with the sweet and beautiful expressions in the primitive and medieval liturgies concerning the middle state of souls. You hold that it is for some a purification by suffering. There is a horrible line in one of your popular hymns, which speaks of their enduring 'Pain above all earthly pain.'"

"We are going on to a second point before we have settled the first. This is not the way to come to a conclusion, but I must follow your arguments wherever they may lead me. As to Purgatory, then, I maintain, and I could allege a number of passages to

prove, that this doctrine was taught both in the Primitive and the Medieval Church. St. Clement of Alexandria, in the second century, speaks of 'a faithful man passing to the severest suffering, and punished still more (whilst he attains not yet, or not at all, to those things which he sees others partaking) for the completion of the penalty for sins committed after baptism.' And St. Augustine, speaking of those who will be saved yet, so as by fire, adds, 'because it is said, "Thou shalt be saved," that fire is despised, yet assuredly, though "saved by fire," that fire will be more grievous than anything that man can suffer in this life.' These are actually the very words of the hymn you quoted."

"I shall look out for both those passages. I had either never read or never noticed them. There is, however, to my mind, something contradictory between St. John's words, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord,' and the idea of souls suffering after death."

"If that is all you can say against us, we may leave this point, for you cannot mean that this is a blasphemous doctrine, which

you could never accept. For my part, I cannot see anything in the Catholic doctrine on that point inconsistent with the Apostle's words. 'Those who die in the Lord'—that is, in the grace of God united to Him, and free from the stains of sin—are blessed in the immediate enjoyment of the beatific vision after death. Those who, though united to God by sanctifying grace, have yet need of purification, have yet some 'wood, and hay, and stubble' that has to be burnt in the fire, are also blessed, because they enjoy the certainty that they are saved, though they may have to suffer greater pains, deeper sorrow, from hope delayed, than we can form an idea of in this world; yet this is perfectly compatible with a feeling of most intense blessedness, from the consciousness that they are united to God, and that nothing can separate them from Him. Would not the severest pain be endured with joy even on earth, if we knew it was hourly bringing us nearer to one . . . . whom we had loved . . . . to one we felt ourselves to be utterly unworthy of; but whom, through patient suffering, we hope one day . . . ."

Mr. Neville's voice faltered, and he broke off suddenly in the midst of his sentence.

Both Edgar and Ita felt for him. The former said gently, in a low voice—

"Yes; I can understand that in some cases suffering might be happiness."

Mr. Neville looked up quickly, and said—

"And that explains Purgatory. And now go on to your next difficulty; you spoke of three or four, I think. Is it the worship of the Blessed Virgin?"

"Yes, it is the attitude of the Roman Church with regard to her that I think startling, really dreadful. St. Bonaventure and St. Bernard would have shrunk with horror at the modern language of Rome with regard to St. Mary."

"Will you give me some instances of the sort of things you think would have shocked those saints."

"I mean such assertions as that some things are impossible to the Son, nothing impossible to the Mother; or, again, that if we must choose an advocate with the Father, it should be rather the Mother than the Son."

"My dear Mr. Derwent, I deny that any approved Catholic author can ever have said these things. It would be impossible for any Catholic who had learnt his Catechism ever to utter such words in the sense that you attach to them. If they were said by Catholics, the Church would condemn them. As to St. Bernard, I could perfectly understand that if you looked at the subject in the light that Protestants do, how some of the things he says about the Blessed Virgin might startle and distress you, but I cannot conceive what you can find in the modern Catholic devotions stranger than some of his sayings: for instance, in his sermon on the Nativity he writes, 'Take away the Sun which enlightens the world, and where is the day? Take away Mary, the star of the sea, and what remains but darkness and the shadow of death?' And in another page of the same sermon, 'With all our hearts and affections, then, with all our desires let us venerate Mary, for such is his will who would that we should receive every thing through her.' And, again, in another place, 'Go then to Mary. The Son will hear the Mother and

the Father will hear the Son. This is the ladder of sinners; this is my chief confidence. This is the only reason of my hope.' I will freely own to you that I had been for some years a Catholic before I knew at all how emphatic are the expressions of the early fathers of the Church of those who lived during the centuries, which the Anglican Church holds to have preserved the faith in all its purity on the subject of devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Nothing in St. Alphonsus Liguori's works exceeds, if indeed it comes up to, what is to be found in their writings."

"I cannot get over the feeling," Edgar said, "that the worship of the Blessed Virgin, carried as far as it is in the Roman Church, must interfere with that devotion to our blessed Lord, which ought entirely to fill and absorb our hearts."

"I have two remarks to make in reply to this observation of yours. First, I would ask you whether the firmest faith in the divinity of our Lord and the strongest personal love for His sacred Humanity are to be found amongst those who ignore the privileges and blame the practice of invoking the

Blessed Virgin, or amongst those who love and pray to her? Whether devotion to our Lord's passion and the habit of constant meditation on the mysteries of His life and death are most prevalent in the Roman Catholic Church, or in Protestant communions? Whether in proportion to the utter neglect of the worship of the Blessed Virgin, Socinianism has not risen up amongst Protestants, and on the other hand, when as of late years in the Anglican Church there has been a return to a more intense realization of the doctrine of the Incarnation, it has not been immediately accompanied by a return also of tenderness and reverence towards the Mother of our blessed Lord?"

Ita raised her eyes to her husband with an expression which said as plainly as if the words had been spoken, "You can give but one answer to that question."

At last he said, "I honour and love the Blessed Virgin; it is the position you give her I object to."

"But this is not a reply to my question. What I urge is, that it is that position which *we* give her which produces the results I

mentioned just now. I ask you if facts do not justify my assertion. Is our blessed Lord more highly honoured, more recognized as God? Is the doctrine of the Holy Trinity preserved in its fullest integrity by those who refuse to honour His Mother, or by those whom you think pay her undue honour? That is the question. I maintain that in every sect which has abandoned the worship of Mary—I need not, in speaking to you, stop to explain in what sense we use that word—the doctrines of the Incarnation of the Divinity of our Lord and of the Holy Trinity have gradually become obscured, and ended by being denied. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is the bulwark of the fundamental principles of Christianity; wherever it is given up, slowly but gradually these principles disappear."

"I attribute this decay to the absence of Church principles, not to the cause you allege. It is disobedience to authority—it is the lawlessness of private judgment—which has undermined Christianity in Protestant sects, and brought about so many evils, even in our Catholic and Apostolical Church; but

what was the second observation you intended to make?"

"I meant to ask you whether those who love any one person ardently, do not also, on that account, love dearly all who belong to that person; and whether they feel that these other affections interfere with the one which has called them forth? Does, for instance, the grandfather who dotes on his daughter's child, love her the less because of the affection he lavishes on her infant? On the contrary, when we love others intensely, do not our hearts warm towards all those they love, or who love them? Why should it be different in the case of the highest, holiest, and tenderest feeling of our nature? Why should our love for Mary, which must necessarily and only proceed from love for her divine Son, diminish it? What a poor mean fear that is of loving God less because we love also the most beautiful, perfect, and dearest work of his hands! According to this narrow view, a soul without affection for any human being would be most capable of loving its Creator. I, for one, could never believe that doctrine. I think that the more

tenderly we look upon men on earth, and on the saints, the angels, and the Blessed Mother of God in Heaven, the more will our hearts expand in adoring devotion towards the great God who has made them and us. Many have practically felt this. Many who once never thought of Mary, and who, through thinking of her, have acquired a new, different, personal feeling for our Lord. You speak of experience. I wish you would believe us!" Mr. Neville exclaimed, suddenly interrupting himself. "We who have crossed the border! We who have entered the promised land! We know what you do not know! We see what you cannot see! And our experience is supported by a large and unanimous Church, whereas yours rests only on a small section of persons who happen to agree with you in your own body; and, if I may speak generally as to converts, their experience is that of persons whose convictions have been tested by great sacrifices."

"You left our Church before she had sprung up, as it were, from her ashes," Edgar exclaimed, with emotion. "You cannot understand what we feel for our

spiritual mother." He glanced at Ita, expecting a responsive look, but she had covered her eyes with her hands, and sat with her head bent down.

None of them spoke for a few instants. Then Edmund Neville said in a different tone, "At Nice we should never have been able to argue so quietly—the air is too exciting. Mentone has such a soothing climate that it helps one to be good tempered."

Ita, glad that he had changed the subject, looked up and smiled. "I think it makes one a little idle, too," she said. "And yet the peasants seem a hard-working race."

"They are so," Mr. Neville answered. "The women, especially; the distances they walk, and the loads they carry, are really wonderful."

"I hope," Ita said, "the boy from Castellar, who used to bring us cones, will hear of my return. He used to come to the villa every week with a bag full of them. If not, I shall have to buy them in the town. As Edgar cannot have a regular English fire for Christmas, I mean to make him a beautiful extravagant one all made of cones. It used

to be one of my childish wishes to make such a fire. It will look like a mountain of blazing pine-apples, and the perfume will be delicious. It is getting rather late now, I think we had better, perhaps, be moving."

They strolled slowly on the beach on their homeward way, enjoying the varying lights on the sea and in the sky. Edgar could not help liking Edmund Neville; he thought him intelligent and refined. Before they parted, he asked him to dine with them on the following day.

CHAPTER V.

On their way home, the Derwents met the Abate Giovanni—Pré Gian, as he was called in the Mentonese dialect. He was an old acquaintance of Ita's, and was delighted to see her. She introduced him to Edgar.

"So she had been married for more than two years! Well, how time did fly—she did not look much older for all that! Did she not find Mentone much altered? Ah! people were building away very fast. There was a new hotel springing up, and five or six villas just finished. What would they come to at last? How pleased Antonia must have been to see her Signorina. And Madalena, he was sure, would walk from Nice, one of these days, to pay her a visit. The villa had been let to English people the last two winters, but Antonia was always complaining

of the *padrona's* absence. Ah! they had been to the Capo, and yesterday to the Annunziata. Brava! Monsieur did not look very strong; but the climate, with the help of God, would soon make him quite well. He was so tall, and tall people are not generally as strong as short ones, like himself—but, perhaps, that was not the case in England, where, he supposed, everybody was tall—but he would not keep them standing in the cold. He should call upon them some day soon," and, with a kind smile, the Abbé left them.

"What a venerable, amiable-looking man," Edgar said, and Ita was pleased.

On the following day Mr. Neville came to dinner, and a good deal of interesting conversation, without any approach to controversy, took place between him and Edgar. He spoke of the *festas* in the neighbouring villages which would take place after Christmas, and Ita, whose delight it had been to go to them in former years, was glad to hear her husband say that they should certainly try to spend St. Agnes's day at the little old town of that name. And when they were sitting

alone together the next evening, she communicated to him a plan which had just entered her head. She wished to institute at Holmwood a festival in honour of the patron saint of their church, St. James the Apostle, and had been thinking over all the details of it. There was a sort of tacit compromise unconsciously going on between her and Edgar at that time. When she saw him vexed at some manifestation of her strong Roman Catholic predilections, she used to propitiate him by proposing to transplant some of her favourite customs or observances into the Church of England in general, and Holmwood church in particular. He was always relieved by her enthusiasm taking that form, and in consequence received these suggestions more graciously than he might have otherwise done.

On this occasion he said, "But do not you remember, darling, that we have kept St. James's day as a festival these last two years. We had red and white roses on the altar. Annie gave us leave to gather as many as we could find. They were very much gone off, but we spoiled her garden of all

that remained, and the school-children had a feast."

"Oh yes; but what I want is to get the people about us, rich and poor, to take an interest in the festival, and come to church as they do here from a distance, and make the day in every way a pleasant one. I think it is so nice when religion is connected with enjoyment, and poor people have so few pleasures."

Edgar smiled and said, "But how would you propose to make our staid country-people merry on the occasion?"

"We might have a fair on the green after the service."

"That would not amuse them much, I think."

"I should like to try, and then the school children might act a little play in a tent, as they did in the hall at Christmas. May I have St. James's day this year to do what I like with?"

"That is a bold request," Edgar said, laughing. "If you do not interfere with the hours of Church Service, and allow Roland and me to have a veto on

your proceedings, you and Eliza may do your best or your worst out of doors. And, indeed, I think you had better try the experiment at Bramblemoor than at Holmwood. I am not sure Annie would like it."

"She likes anything you like."

"Yes, she is very good and kind. God bless her," Edgar answered, with a scarcely perceptible sigh. "I wish she was married!"

"Do you," Ita said. "Would she be happier do you think?"

"Why don't you think she would?"

"I am not sure. I am going to say a strange thing, but Annie loves Holmwood, and everything about it with an intensity which would almost interfere, I fancy, with her happiness as a wife. She never likes to be anywhere else. It is the only object of her thoughts. She does not care to see anybody but us. Do you know, Edgar, that she wishes us to have children more even than we wish it ourselves. She has told me that there is nothing would make her so happy. I should be afraid, if we had a little child,

that she would want to keep it all to herself. I think her affection for you is the most beautiful, unselfish, and singular feeling possible."

Edgar looked at his wife's eager, sweet, expressive face, and thought more of it at that moment than even of poor Annie's feelings. He was as much in love with Ita as the day they had married.

"My own darling," he said, drawing her near him, "you are quite right; Annie's character is wonderfully unselfish and generous. She has been to me a friend such as is seldom met with in this world, and that is the reason why I long to see her as happy as we are."

"But do you think she could ever have been as happy as we are? If she had married you . . . ."

"Me! Oh, she would not have been happy with me. I could never have loved her as she deserves."

"Perhaps I am wrong, but I have a strong impression that she has the sort of fate that will, on the whole, make her happiest. That she would not now be happy

in marriage. She knows you owe everything to her—your little wife, and all the blessings, comforts, and enjoyments which surround us—that home she has made so perfect; and I am sure this thought is a continual delight to her . . . ."

"But I want her to be loved, and to love as we love each other."

Ita pursed her lips and shook her head in a way that said, as plainly as words could have done, that she thought this a very wild, improbable, unreasonable wish, something quite beyond hoping for; and then, following up the unuttered thought, she said, "And besides that, I am sure that one who had ever loved you would never love very much any one else."

"Oh nonsense, wife of mine, you are in a strange delusion on that point."

"Not a bit of it. I do not say that you are better looking, or cleverer, or more excellent than anybody else in the world . . . ."

"No, really?" Edgar interrupted, laughing.

"But only . . . ."

"Only you are a little goose—a dear

darling, perfect little goose;" and Edgar kissed his wife to stop the current of his own praises.

Just then the door opened, and the servant announced the Abate Giovanni. Ita greeted him very warmly, and Edgar very civilly; but he had made an appointment to go to Mr. Nilson's house at eight o'clock, and after a few minutes' conversation, he was obliged to excuse himself to the Abate on account of this engagement, but begged him not to shorten his visit to Ita, whom he knew would be delighted to have his company.

So when he went away, they began to talk of old times—the Abate spoke with feeling of poor Lady Emily's death—and said he had been glad to hear that Ita was married; her husband had a prepossessing exterior, and looked so good, that he felt sure he must be a very amiable man. "Was it true," he asked, "that he was an English clergyman?"

"Yes," she answered, "he was an Anglican clergyman."

The Abate sighed.

She hastened to say, "But he is not a Protestant, he is a Catholic, an Anglo Catholic."

"Not a minister of the Church of England, then?"

"Yes, of the Catholic Church of England."

"But that is impossible, Signora. If he was an English Catholic priest he could not be married."

"He is not an English Roman Catholic priest, but a Catholic priest of the Anglican Church."

"But the Anglican Church is Protestant."

"No, Pré Gian," Ita eagerly rejoined, for she had learnt as a child from Antonia to call him so; "that is the mistake. It has been thought to be Protestant but it is really Catholic."

"We cannot be talking of the same Church, Signorina. I mean the Anglican Church or Church of England, to which the Reverend Nilson belongs."

"Oh yes, it is the same Church; but my husband thinks quite differently from Mr. Nilson. I assure you nothing can be more

different. Edgar believes in the Real Presence and in Confession and Absolution . . . ."

"O brava!" the Abate exclaimed, "then he is really a Catholic; but then how can he be of the same religion as the Reverend Nilson, who tells our poor people that the Blessed Sacrament is nothing but a piece of bread, and that it is idolatry to kneel before it, and that they should not confess their sins to a priest, but only to God."

"Well, it is not the same religion, but it is the same Church."

"What, are there two religions in one Church?" the Abate asked, still more puzzled.

"Edgar says his religion, his way of thinking I mean—I suppose he would not quite admit about the two religions—is what the Anglican Church really teaches, and that what Mr. Nilson teaches is heresy."

"But then why does your Church let him teach it?"

"It cannot help it," Ita answered; "unfortunately some of our bishops think as he does."

"Strana Chiesa!" murmured the Abate. "But, Signorina, since you think it right to confess, whom do you confess to as you have no priests."

"But we have priests. My husband looks upon himself as a priest."

"Indeed! and do you go to Confession to him?"

"No, but others do."

"And his bishop gives him faculties to hear confessions?"

"His bishop unfortunately does not approve of Confession. Very few of our bishops do. None of them are as Catholic as my husband and his friends, except one, perhaps, the Bishop of ——"

"Then your husband and his friends think they know better than their bishops?"

"Yes, because they believe what you do, what all the Catholic Church believes."

"But then why do they not become Catholics and join our Church?"

"Because they think you are wrong in some things, and that the Church of Rome has a little corrupted the faith."

"Ah! then about some things they know

better than their bishops, and about others they know better than the whole Catholic Church. What clever men they must be! What Prayer-book do they use?"

"The Prayer-book of the Church of England."

"What you call the Common Prayer-book? The Reverend Nilson's Prayer-book?"

"Yes," Ita answered, vexed to admit that there was anything common between Edgar and Mr. Nilson.

"That good gentleman showed me one day an Italian translation of his Common Prayer-book, and I saw in it that your Articles of religion say that the sacrifices of Masses are blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits? the Reverend Nilson told me that every minister of his Church was obliged to sign them."

"Yes, but they do not believe them; that is not in what seems to be their sense."

The Abate looked grave, and said, "I am not a learned man, Signorina, or a deep theologian, but it appears to my plain common sense, the greatest folly and delusion

imaginable for men to think they are Catholics who obey neither the Pope nor their own bishops, if they really have any; who remain in a Church that has no power to prevent its own ministers from teaching error—for if some of them tell their flocks that our Lord is really present in the Holy Eucharist, as you say your husband does, and others, like the Reverend Nilson, that it is superstitious and idolatrous to believe it, it is clear that one or the other must be teaching what is false—who use a Prayer-book which says one thing and means another, or means nothing at all, and sign articles of religion they do not believe to be true."

"But it is very likely my way of explaining the matter which makes it seem all wrong," Ita exclaimed. "It does sound very bad in the way you put it; but will you speak to my husband on the subject? He will explain it to you so much better than I can."

The Abate said he should be happy to converse with Mr. Derwent on that and any other topic, and then they spoke of other things. After he had taken leave of her,

however, and as he was going towards the door, he stopped, turned round, and with a good-humoured smile on his shrewd Italian face, he said to Ita, "Pardon me, Signorina, but as an old friend allow me to ask you whether you really believe yourself that your husband is really and truly a priest?"

Ita blushed and hesitated. "I suppose he is a priest of the Anglican Church," she answered. "I certainly can never feel as if they were quite like Roman Catholic priests."

"I should think not," the Abate said, again smiling. "I have no doubt Mr. Derwent is a good husband and a very amiable gentleman, but as to his being a priest . . . ." He made an expressive shrug, and bowing again to the clergyman's wife, left the room.

After he was gone, Ita sat down near the window watching for Edgar's return. The night was clear and cold, the stars wonderfully bright, the sea splashing on the pebbly shore, and the mountains, the town, and the woods lighted up by the moon almost as clearly as if it had been day. Just below the

villa, on the spot where the hospice now stands, was a grove of ilexes, through which a winding path led from the road to the gate of the garden.

As she gazed on this well-known view, she thought on the strange chance which had made her the foundling child of the sea, the wife of an English clergyman, and the question of the Abate haunted her. Did she believe Anglican ministers were really priests? did she look upon her own husband in that light? Once perhaps she had done so. In those early days at Bramblemoor she had reverenced him as a teacher and a guide without analyzing the exact nature of his position. She had felt for him an humble, timid, disinterested respect and affection which did not at all militate against the ideas she had unconsciously formed in a Catholic country of the priestly office and character; but when imperceptibly at first and then irresistibly that affection became more ardent and more tender, she shrank from associating a passionate human feeling with religious ministrations; and when that love which had once been hopeless was blessed beyond her

hopes—when she became Edgar's wife, his darling, his treasure, when in the fulness of joy and mutual affection their lives were bound together in the holiest and most intimate union that can exist on earth, she felt less and less able to consider him as a priest. It seemed to her that consecration and sacrifice were involved in that office; that it called for a different kind of holiness than that of married life. Every tender playful endearment, every passionate emotion, all the unreserved confidence of mutual affection was out of keeping with her idea of its sacredness. In using the name in relation to the Anglican clergy, she had gradually associated with it a perfectly different notion than the one she had formed of the Roman Catholic priesthood, but had never clearly drawn the distinction in her own mind. But the question she had just been asked had obliged her to do so, and she then realized her utter disbelief in the fact of Anglican orders. She felt that had she believed Edgar to be a priest, she could never have been his wife. The very thought was strange and repulsive. The more she loved him the more she hated it. But then

what did this tend to? Where would it lead her?

There are moments in that irresistible progress of the mind towards an inevitable result, when we feel alarmed at the cogency of our own reasonings, when we long to shut out conviction like the prisoners in a sea-girt cave, to keep out the rising of the inexorable tide. Conviction was pressing upon her. She was aware of it, and tried to stem it by recalling some of the arguments her husband had opposed to Mr. Neville's; but, like slackened ropes which fail to support the hand which grasps them, they afforded her little help.

What desperate battles have thus been secretly fought in support of the Anglican theory, within the depths of many a soul whose whole freight of earthly joys and weal has been embarked in that sinking vessel! How it has played the devil's advocate against itself, and with what almost conscious evasions silenced the cry of awakened conscience. Let those who have never known any measure of this strange suffering, deal gently with others who are writhing under its pangs.

When Edgar came in he found his wife still sitting at the window, so absorbed in thought that she did not notice his approach. There were no lights in the room; she had forgotten to ring for them. He put his hand on her shoulder, and said, "So your friend is gone?"

"Oh yes, he has been gone some time," she answered; "I was very sorry you could not stay. I should have liked you to talk to him."

"I hope you explained to him that I was obliged to keep my appointment with Mr. Nilson. He had called here two or three times, and I had sent him word I should be with him at eight."

"Then, of course, you found him at home?"

"Yes, and his wife also. They seem good-natured people, but we did not touch on any subjects on which we should have been likely to disagree. Mrs. Nilson is coming to see you to-morrow."

"Is she?" Ita said, with a sigh. She owed Mrs. Nilson a grudge since the time when she was a very little girl. She had been left

alone with her one day in the drawing-room, and the clergyman's wife had asked her, after a few exhortations, in the peculiar phraseology of the Evangelical school, if she thought she had found Jesus?

"Yes," Ita had answered, "I find Him at San Michele, when I go there with Antonia."

Mrs. Nilson had been dreadfully shocked, and with mild indignation remonstrated with Lady Emily on the danger of suffering that Italian nurse to take the child to church with her. This had caused a temporary prohibition on the subject, which had left an unpleasant impression on Ita's mind. She did not, however, mention this anecdote to Edgar, and made no comment on the announcement of Mrs. Nilson's visit.

There was one subject on her mind which she did not wish to speak of first, but about which she was very anxious to know what her husband's intentions were. It was Saturday, and what did he mean to do about church on Sunday? Would he go to San Michele or to Mr. Nilson's dining-room? While she was playing to him on her old piano all the tunes she could remember by heart, and after-

wards reading aloud some numbers of the "Guardian," her mind was occupied with that doubt. The tone of the Puseyite paper annoyed her more than usual that evening. During the last few days she had become very sensitive to any attacks on the Church of Rome. Her cheeks flushed and her voice faltered when she had to read out what she thought unjust and one-sided statements. She did not, however, exclaim or protest against them. She was afraid of awakening in Edgar antagonistic feelings, for she had an instinctive conviction that the amount of respect for Roman Catholicism which his own theories obliged him to profess, would easily change into hostility if she manifested too openly her own predilections.

When they had finished reading that night there was a pause, and then Edgar said, "The service is at eleven o'clock to-morrow. As I expected, there is no early celebration."

Ita made no answer. She had rather hoped he would go to High Mass.

"They have advanced a step since your time," he continued. "The service is in a

room dedicated, at least, to that purpose; not in Mr. Nilson's dining-room."

"And are we to go there to-morrow?"

"Yes, of course," he answered, looking surprised.

Ita's countenance fell. She hesitated a little, and then said, "But why not go to a real church when we can do so? You used to say that abroad the Roman Catholic Church was *the* Catholic Church, as the Anglican Church is in England. Why, then, do we not go to San Michele, instead of to Mr. Nilson's service. *He* is certainly not a Catholic."

"Not, certainly, in his opinions; but though he may be unconscious of his own position and character, still he is a priest of the Church of England, and he celebrates the service she appoints. It is, therefore, our duty to attend that service as an act of obedience to our spiritual mother. There is no objection abroad to our occasionally attending Roman Catholic services, but our own must always have the first claim, even when the mode of performing it is distasteful to us."

The point was decided then. Ita made no further objection. It was a disappointment; but with her usual sweetness of temper she did not show it. Nobody had naturally a more docile disposition. Obedience to her husband was her constant habit in little as well as great things.

So the next morning, without a murmur, even though the bells of San Michele were ringing their most joyous peal, she walked with Edgar along the Via Lunga to the Piazza del Capo, and then up a steep flight of stairs to what went by the name of the Temple of the English. It was a long room with two rows of chairs divided by a narrow passage; a table covered with green baize stood before the window at the farthest end, with a chair on each side of it. The Common Prayer-book and a Bible on the reading-desk, and a few hymn-books scattered on the seats of the congregation, were the only visible signs of religious worship in this melancholy-looking chapel.

Ita resolved to suppress all feelings of discontent, and to attend the service with attention and devotion. It was always a hap-

piness to her to kneel by Edgar's side, to pour forth her soul in prayer in the same words he was using, and to hear his voice singing God's praises in unison with her own. With real humility she made an effort that day to find strength and peace in the performance of a religious duty; and, perhaps, if no hymn had been sung, and no sermon preached, she might, to a certain extent, have succeeded. But when, on glancing over the page of a book which a lady by her side had civilly handed to her, she perceived that the hymn which had been given out was one of praise and thanksgiving for the blessings of the Reformation, and its glorious author, the immortal Luther, a sick feeling of disgust came over her. How could she and Edgar be standing there joining in worship with those who honoured what they abhorred; who exulted in what they lamented! She looked at her husband and saw that he was moved. He looked flushed and annoyed. Then came the sermon. She did not care that Mr. Nilson preached in a black gown instead of in a surplice. Those were not the little details that were a grief to her. She

tried to be patient. She raised her heart to God, and sought to place herself in the frame of mind with which a sermon ought to be listened to. The text alarmed her, for she had an indistinct remembrance of the sort of comments Mr. Nilson used to make upon the Second Commandment, according to the Anglican version, part of the first in the Catholic one. Her apprehensions were justified. Every hackneyed charge of idolatry, every misapplication of the words of Scripture on the one hand, and misrepresentation of the practice of the Catholic Church on the other, were brought forward and urged in offensive and insulting terms; and assertions made which, from her own acquaintance with a Catholic population, she knew to be false. The blood rushed into her face when the preacher spoke of the poor deluded Papists and their idolatrous religion. Her temples throbbed, and her heart beat with violence, when he went on to stigmatize Mass as an act of idolatry, and a blasphemous fable. It was more than she could bear. It could not be a good or holy spirit of endurance that could make them who

called themselves Catholics join in worship with persons who thus designated the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which they themselves professed to believe in and to offer up, which could make them sit still and listen to the utterance of such painful words. She longed to get up and go. She looked again at Edgar. He had shaded his face with his hand, and she could not catch his eye.

She tried to pray, but it seemed a mockery of all religion to pretend to belong to the same Church as the minister who stood before them; yet he was appointed by an Anglican bishop, and he professed quite as much attachment to the Church of England as even Edgar could do. It seemed as if in that one discourse Mr. Nilson had contrived to say everything that could most shock and wound any one with Catholic feelings and opinions. After dwelling some time on what he called the idolatry of the Mass, he went on to speak of the Blessed Virgin as "that woman in no way different from other women, and who after the birth of Jesus Christ had had several other children."

Ita then stopped her ears, and cared not

if others saw it. She could not, she would not, listen to the rest of the sermon, and felt quite ill with sorrow and vexation. Many who may read these pages will look upon this account of her feelings as an absurd exaggeration; but we appeal to all who have known what it is with Catholic feelings and sympathies to attend the services of the English Church, and hear a completely different faith preached, appealing equally with their own to her formularies, and with far more reason than their own to her articles and homilies—to find the theories advocated in particular places, and by particular clergymen of their own school, breaking down when compared with the general practice and belief of the ministers and members of the Established Church; and what ought to be spiritual instruction given with authority by duly appointed teachers, a snare, a scandal, and a misery—something to be withstood, resisted, endured, put up with, or disclaimed in turns. "A cross," as the Puseyite leaders are wont to call it.

Not one of the small congregation assembled in that chapel probably felt as she, or

even as Edgar did. They were used to Mr. Nilson's doctrine and style of preaching. Some of them, indeed, might perhaps think it tiresome of him always to attack the Roman Catholics; they might even consider it not quite charitable; but it did not otherwise shock them. They agreed on the whole with his views, though they would not perhaps have used such strong expressions.

Ita did not feel so angry with Mr. Nilson as pained that Edgar could, as it were, sanction by his attendance in his chapel the sentiments he uttered. She was not learned, nor very clever, but she had the good sense much less common than many people think, that makes a person see that two and two makes four, and an honesty of mind which is sometimes distinct from honesty of heart, but which in her case was united to it. If Mr. Nilson really thought what he said about Catholics he was quite right to preach against them. But that Edgar should belong to the same Church as him, that the same ecclesiastical authorities should depute them both to teach contradictory doctrines to its members,

that they should be brother clergymen, as Mr. Nilson had said, in a note to her husband the day before;—this she could not reconcile with her simple ideas of truth and consistency.

At last the sermon came to an end. With a sense of escape Edgar and Ita went quickly out, and down the stairs, and then into the road leading to the olive groves. They felt it a relief to be out of doors, and walked on for some time in silence. Edgar looked gloomy. She did not regret it.

"What horrible trash that man preached?" he said, at last; "and those abominable Low Church hymns! What a scandal it is that such persons should be clergymen of our Church!"

Ita felt it too deeply to be able to say much. He went on abusing the sermon, and finding fault with the arrangement of the chapel. At last she said, "Edgar, I think sometimes that it will be impossible for me . . . ."

"To go there again?" he exclaimed. This was not what she was about to say, but

he went on, "Well, I own I rather feel that myself. But, dearest, we must be patient. Rome was not built in a day."

The mention of Rome at that moment was somewhat unlucky; he hastened to add, "Catholic principles cannot spread in our Church quite as rapidly as we would wish. The very difference, the immense contrast you can yourself observe between the services at Holmwood and Bramblemoor, and many other places in England where church principles are now carried out, and such an exhibition of heresy as goes on here, shows you the wonderful progress we have already made. Some twenty years ago this sort of thing went on almost everywhere."

"Then people at that time had no chance of learning Catholic truth, and now how many there must be who have not any chance of it either!"

"But the number who have is increasing every day, and if the disloyal and misguided men who have left us had been true to our Church their number would, by this time, have been much greater."

"But is it not very bad for the soul to

hear heresy preached by the very persons appointed to teach us ?"

"Not if you are patient and accept it as a trial of your faith."

"But it seems to me a sort of trial that we ought not to accept."

"Well, do as you like, dearest Ita. I do not insist on your attending the English service here. I know it is very painful. Only I think it my duty to do so, however much Mr. Nilson's sermons may disgust me."

"But I cannot bear the idea of not going to church with you," Ita said, with tears in here eyes.

"I wish with all my heart we had never come here!" Edgar exclaimed. "I had a thousand times rather have lost my health, my sight, or even my life, than that you should lose faith in the Church of England!"

He looked so agitated, that wishing to soothe him she said, "But I did not say, I did not mean that I wished to leave it."

"Oh, no;" he cried, interrupting her. "I did not for an instant suppose you did. No, my own darling, my treasure,

my precious wife, you could not, I know, harbour the deliberate thought of separating yourself from me in a way that would destroy all my happiness, ruin for me every prospect of usefulness, and even drive me from you. No, I am sure you could never dream of it; of all the forms of misery, it is the one I could not look in the face. No, all I meant was that it would pain me very much if, on account of my health, we had come to a place where, from casual circumstances, you may feel more deeply the existing trials in our Church, and contrast it unfavourably with the Roman communion. It is for that reason that, though I feel it myself a duty to attend the Anglican service, I do not press you to do so. Go if you like on Sundays to one of the Roman Catholic churches, and pray that our Church may be delivered from its state of bondage; that it may fulfil its great mission, and still keep free from the errors and abuses of its sister Church."

"We can see about that when next Sunday comes," Ita said. She could not in fact bear the thought of the shadow of separation,

which what Edgar had proposed seemed to throw on their future path. She felt that there would be no sense of duty to support her in it. If they belonged to the same religion they ought to go to the same church. Her place was by his side unless she clearly saw it should be elsewhere. On that day, and those that followed, a cold, dull heaviness took possession of her soul. Her apprehension of faith as a reality seemed to grow confused and dim. After all, she was too ignorant to decide what was right or wrong. Her duty to her husband was, of course, a plain and positive one, and come what might she would not make him unhappy. She would try not to take those religious questions so much to heart. It was not a woman's business to judge of controversial points. She summoned to her assistance all the sophistry with which weak, shrinking, human nature helps itself when it sees before it a terrible alternative. She succeeded for a while in silencing her doubts and misgivings. She paid visits to her friends, and carefully avoided all mention of religion. This was easy enough. They were not anxious to press it

upon her. The pious ones among them thought praying for her would do more good than talking. Others did not take the trouble of thinking about it at all. She gave up all attempts to persuade them she and Edgar were Catholics, and ceased to ponder over that point herself. Her prayers were said in a hurried or formal manner. She did not feel inclined to read the Bible or spiritual books, because then the very subjects she wanted not to think of forced themselves on her mind. If she could but tide over the time abroad, all would be right again she hoped when she returned to England.

Edgar thought her rather capricious, because after having seemed at first to like so much going to the Catholic churches, she seemed now to object to it. Even on Christmas-day, and the ensuing festivals, it was somewhat reluctantly that she went with him in the afternoon to San Michele. She made no difficulty about going to the English service when he did, but everything connected with religion seemed at that time distasteful to her, and her spirits always rose when the Sunday was over, and mostly they rose when

she was alone with her husband; when they spent whole days of sunshine and more than ordinary beauty in the valleys of Mentone, or of Cabral, or in some quiet spot on the seashore. The cloud that then obscured for her divine truth, the vague uncertainty which dimmed her spiritual vision, made her cling to him with a yet deeper earthly worship. She had one of those hearts that are not in danger of selfishness. She bore meekly the mental trial she was undergoing. Now and then shaking off the heavy weight of discouragement, she made a fervent appeal to God's mercy for light; but even while the prayer was on her lips, her heart trembled lest the answer should come too distinctly and too soon.

CHAPTER VI.

Edgar and Ita had not many visitors: he did not speak French or Italian easily, and this disinclined him to cultivate her Mentonese friends, and for particular reasons, he did not wish to see much of the Nilsons or of Mr. Neville; but he liked the latter, and they sometimes met him in their walks. Edgar asked him to dinner once or twice, and sometimes he paid them an evening visit; but, since the day at Capo Martino, Edgar had carefully avoided all controversial conversation with him in Ita's presence. But one night when she had gone to bed early with a cold, and he happened to be alone when Mr. Neville called, he could not resist saying to him, "I hope you pray, as we do, for the ultimate union of our respective Churches?"

"I pray," he answered, "for the conver-

sion of all the members of your Church; but as I do not consider it to be a Church, in the Catholic sense of the word, I cannot pray, in the way you do, for reunion."

"You assume then, as a fact, what your own Church has always considered as an open question, that is, the invalidity of Anglican orders?"

"The Holy See has formally denied the validity of Anglican orders by a decree of the Congregation of the Holy Office, confirmed by Pope Clement XI., and this decision is everywhere received and acted upon."

"But we do not, nor do many members of your own communion, accept a decision of that sort as conclusive, that has not received the sanction of a General Council.

"The Church shows by her acts, which are in accordance with that decision, her estimate of the validity of Anglican orders. I require no other evidence. Nobody can deny that grave doubts exist as to the historical fact on which you found your belief in the validity of your orders."

"It appears to me to be established beyond dispute."

"But, supposing it to be so, it would not decide the Catholicity of the English Church. The question would still remain — Is this succession held in heresy or schism? The succession alone avails nothing for your argument."

"But it does avail, when, at the same time, we repel the charge of heresy and schism."

"But the Church of Rome considers you to be an heretical communion, and you cannot clear yourself of the guilt of schism, except by retorting the accusation. Either the Roman Catholic Church, or the so-called Church of England, must have grievously erred in matters of faith. How can it be otherwise? Who can read the Thirty-Nine Articles and not see that either our Church or yours teaches what is false?"

"I deny that utterly. We agree as to all essential Catholic doctrines. As to the Articles, I should have thought that you must have been long ago aware that we do not consider them as Articles of faith, but simply of religion. When they seem to reflect on the Roman Church, they are, in reality,

directed only against the Court of Rome. They were intended, and the homilies also, to meet special emergencies, and might easily be reconsidered when the question of reunion comes to be seriously contemplated; the more so as the Council of Trent has rectified the abuses against which they were directed."

"I know this is the way in which Anglicans defend their subscription of the Thirty-nine Articles, but I own I cannot understand how any dispassionate person, not interested in doing away with a difficulty fatal to the position Anglicans wish to maintain, and to the views they hold, could admit this as a tenable explanation."

"You look at the subject from your point of view, and see it, of course, in a different light from what we do."

"But I do not find it generally so difficult to conceive the mental position of those who differ from me. I can understand the reasoning of Protestants, of Unitarians, even to a certain degree the arguments of Infidels, but I own that the Anglican theory has always seemed to me so anomalous and inconsistent, that I cannot comprehend how it

can satisfy an honest and logical mind. As a matter of fact, I do not think you would find any one, who was not interested in doing so, admitting, for instance, that a man can conscientiously sign the Thirty-nine Articles, and, at the same time, believe everything the Council of Trent sets forth."

"But I do not profess to do so."

"Ay! there is another difficulty. I met with one of your clergymen, a short time ago, who assured me he did. There is such a variety of opinions, even amongst the members of your own party, that the argument which meets the case of one individual, does not apply to the next person you speak to."

"You implied, by what you said just now, that it is only from motives of interest that Anglicans defend the position of their Church. Is not this rather a rash judgment?"

"I did not mean merely temporal interests, but all those which touch their prejudices, affections, and predilections. I see, on the one hand, the Anglo-Catholic theory maintained by those to whom it is of the greatest importance to establish it. I see it admitted by no indifferent parties.

And, moreover, I know that numbers of persons, during the last three hundred years, to whom it would have been the greatest advantage and relief to believe in it, have been unable to do so. At one time, English Roman Catholics would have saved their lives by accepting it; later, their properties and their political rights; and in our days we see Anglican clergymen reducing themselves, with their wives and their children, to the extremity of poverty, and losing their position in society—men and women foregoing the brightest prospects, and running the risk of banishment from home, and disinheritance, all which evils they could avoid by, as I say, accepting the theory of the Catholicity of the English Church. If it was obviously tenable, is it possible to conceive that they would not joyfully avail themselves of it."

"Suffering for the sake of a religious conviction is, in itself, no evidence of its truth. Though I have not more sympathy than you have for the French Huguenots and the Waldenses, we cannot deny that they went through great sufferings, rather than renounce their heresies."

"Yes; but thinking, as they did, there was no alternative for them but to give up their tenets, or suffer for them. Now, what I mean is, that a certain number of persons in the Church of England maintain a theory which saves them from suffering, and yet they say permits them to believe all Catholic doctrine, and follow all Catholic practices. If this theory was tenable, would English Roman Catholics, for three hundred years, have suffered in so many and various ways sooner than adopt it?"

"If any one is unable to satisfy himself that the English Church is Catholic, he must of necessity become a Romanist; but those who are convinced that she is a branch of the visible Church of Christ, are bound to remain in her Communion."

"Certainly; if they can really believe that their own opinion on that point, and that of a few more belonging to a particular scheme in the Anglican Church, is to be relied on in preference to that of the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Church, the Protestant Dissenters, and the majority of the members of their own communion, all of which, while

differing on other points, agree in considering Anglican pretensions to Catholicity as unfounded and preposterous."

"The fact of the revival of Catholic doctrines among us is itself an answer to your estimate of our position."

"I should say that the very expression, 'revival of Catholic doctrines,' on the contrary, confirms that estimate. You can revive in a Church piety and zeal; you can improve and elevate the morality of its clergy and laity, and cause stricter discipline to be observed; but when you speak of reviving forgotten doctrines, and of spreading them in a Church which, at the same time, you profess to regard as a teacher of truth, there is in this a contradiction of ideas which I do not see how you can get over. You are gradually getting your Church to teach you what you say she ought to teach; then, in what sense are you receiving her teaching? By your own acknowledgment you are Catholicising your Church, instead of your Church Catholicising you. Under these circumstances, how can she be said to be a teacher—how can she command submission,

or speak with authority? Now, let me just put a case to you. Take a simple-minded person, willing to learn and to obey his spiritual pastors and masters as his Catechism tells him to do. He has no knowledge, no preconceived opinions, but natural, plain, good sense. In despair of judging for himself, he resolves to accept the teaching of the Church of England, and submit to her guidance. Where shall he find it? He asks who are its exponents and its rulers. The answer is, of course, the Archbishops and Bishops. Well, with one or two exceptions, though differing about other things, they will tell him to eschew Puseyism. He asks who is the head of the Anglican Church. The Queen; Her Majesty is a thorough Protestant—a great admirer of the German Reformers. What are its articles of religion? The Thirty-nine Articles; reading them as a plain, uninstructed man would do, he could not, in his honest simplicity, but think 'the Church of England may admit of some differences of opinion, but there is one thing quite clear: it is Protestant, and no Catholic can belong to it.' If he takes to

reading history, will it confirm or destroy this impression? When has the Reformed Church of England, before the last few years, ever repudiated the name of Protestant? Have not Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer been called Protestant Martyrs? Has it not made common cause with foreign Protestants, and has not its hatred of the Church of Rome, its bitter unceasing animosity against it, been the prevailing spirit in it for three hundred years? And even now, though some of your High Church writers call it a sister Church, they cannot refrain from abuse and misrepresentation."

"And has not the Church of Rome," Edgar exclaimed, "been very hard upon us, bitterly unkind? We, the Catholics of the Church of England, who are fighting for the faith with its enemies at home, had some right to expect sympathy and encouragement from your Church, and we have met with neither one nor the other."

"If I was not afraid of saying what might seem offensive," Edmund Neville said, "I would tell you openly what I think on that point."

"Say what you like."

"Well, I would put the case in this way. Let us suppose that, in feudal times, a great lord has been violently deprived of a portion of his dominions by one of his neighbours, who for twenty years has held it by main force, and governed it very badly according to the opinion of the original possessor. This usurping lord dies and leaves three sons, to whom the possession of the province devolves. One of these, with better natural dispositions than his brothers, dislikes their spirit and conduct, and would prefer that the country should be governed in the same way as it used to be under the rule of its former lord. He accordingly writes to him :—

"'My Lord,—I do not altogether approve of your acts in past times, and I should be unwilling to separate myself from my brothers much as I blame them, and detest the manner in which this province was taken from you; but I have been searching into old family documents, and I have not any doubt in my own mind — indeed, I am quite persuaded — that we are relatives of yours, though my brothers, indeed, do not acknowledge our common

descent. I do not, therefore, under any circumstances, contemplate restoring to you this property, nor submitting to your government; but, if I can get the upper hand in the House, I fully intend, provided you agree to acknowledge us as your relatives, to adopt most of your ideas and principles, and perhaps even enter into a friendship with you.'

"I conceive that the original possessor's reply would be: 'If you detect the manner in which this property was taken from me, prove it by giving up your share of it. I do not see in the documents you allude to any proof that you are related to me. On that point I agree with your brothers, and so do all our neighbours. I protest against your assumption of the fact, and against the claim you found upon it, and till you give it up, and address me as a subject to whose allegiance I have a right, no friendship can exist between us.' Would this letter be a hard and unkind one under the circumstances?"

"This may be very ingenious, Mr. Neville, but it is not a just parallel."

"Surely you must admit it to be just as

far as the question goes of harshness and unkindness in the treatment of your claims by the Church of Rome, which utterly disallows them."

"You are too imaginative for me."

"Too logical," Mr. Neville thought, though he did not say so.

After a pause, Edgar said, "It is of no use to discuss this point with Romanists. There is a predetermination, an unavoidable one, indeed, in their case, not to admit our arguments or understand our position."

"But has not that position been abandoned by men who, so far from being predetermined on the subject, struggled with a sort of despair to keep their hold of it? Did not they surrender at last to what was repugnant and distasteful to them, leaving that which was dear and pleasing? Did not one powerful and subtle mind, in particular, exert its utmost ingenuity to find a mode of escape from the dreaded conclusion, and does not a famous piece of casuistry still appealed to by those who cling to the drifting bark he had vainly sought to guide into port, remain a monument of the ardent desire of the writer

not to forsake the communion he had once hoped formed part of the Catholic Church? No, I cannot understand you; I do not see how with your Prayer-book and your homilies, containing what they do, in your hands—with the testimony of history before you, the deaths of Fisher and More; the numbers of priests and laymen tortured and hanged in the days of persecution; the starving converts of the present day, those confessors whom infidels may sneer at, but whom you who believe in Christ and in a Church cannot despise,—that you can think that this long series of protests against the Catholicity of the so-called Church of England was simply a mistake; that Sir Thomas More might have been as contented a *diocésain* of Cranmer or of Cromwell as you of Dr. Blomfield or Dr. Phillpotts; that Father Arrowsmith and Father Southwell, instead of dying at Tyburn, might have been Queen Elizabeth's bishops or priests, though she indeed with her shrewd, keen, clear-sightedness despised her own creations, and still have been as good, nay, according to your theory, better Catholics than as it was they

proved themselves; and that the poor convert clergyman who entered a short time ago the walls of a workhouse with his wife and children, and another who has seen his wife die from the hardships of sudden poverty, have gone through all this misery gratuitously when they might perfectly well have been Catholic priests in the Established Church of England—dear Mr. Derwent, that you believe all this firmly, undoubtedly, unhesitatingly, is the hardest trial of my belief in your sincerity. But I do believe in it . . . . Yes, I know how difficult it is to see . . . . to admit . . . . I have no right to judge others . . . ."

Edgar was moved by the earnestness with which this was said. The thought crossed his mind that he was very glad Ita was not present. "This sort of thing might have an effect upon her," he thought. "It is plausible, but where would be our faith and our trust if everything was clear and plain to us?" And he fell back on that fatal principle of patience—patience in error—patience as a refuge against conviction—patience as a sedative to the most reasonable

misgivings. "Now," he said gently, "you must let me have my say as I have let you have yours. In the first place I consider that the Reformation was in many respects as injurious to our Church as to yours. It brought about in it, indeed, in a violent manner, some of the beneficial changes which the Council of Trent effected on the Continent. It cleared away many abuses, but then it inflicted on us great and serious evils. The tyranny of the State took the place of Papal despotism; doctrines which it has never formally disowned were certainly obscured and thrown into the shade, still in the worst of times there have been among us witnesses to Catholic truth. A remarkable tradition has handed it down from generation to generation, like a thread of gold through a dark and coarse woof. We are the lineal descendants of the first British Christians. We can look back to the Church which the Apostles planted in our country, and to our own as descending from it in uninterrupted succession. There have been sad and dark pages in its history, but now light is again shining upon it and grace flows

abundantly upon us through its ministrations."

"But if the present Church of England descends from any Church at all, it must be from the Anglo-Saxon Church founded by St. Augustine."

"I beg your pardon. The British Church had bishops recognized by the rest of Christendom long before St. Augustine came. Seven of them conferred with him when he arrived. He did not confer orders, he only founded new sees."

"But I need not remind you that there were in England at that time two distinct races—the British and the Anglo-Saxon, the conquered and the conquerors. The British chiefly in and about Wales. The seven bishops Augustine conferred with belonged to the conquered race. It was on the borders of Wales that the conference took place. He entreated them to help him to convert their Saxon conquerors. They absolutely refused, and he prophesied their destruction. They had nothing whatsoever to do with the Anglo-Saxon Church, of which he was the Apostle and Metropolitan at

Canterbury—the Church of Edward the Confessor, of St. Thomas à Becket, of Sir Thomas More. If these men were to return to life, could you for a moment suppose that they would side with the Anglican and not with the Roman Catholic Church in England?"

"I think those sort of suppositions irrelevant and captious. We cannot at this distance of time judge how the minds of men of former ages would be affected by the present state of things amongst us. If you find it so difficult to admit the Catholicity of the Church of England . . . ."

"Not difficult but impossible."

"Well, if you find it so impossible, I find it impossible also to believe in the divine authority of Popes, many of whom were elected through the undue influence of emperors, women even, and lawless nobles who prevailed on the cardinals to raise unworthy persons to the Papal chair."

"Well, suppose the facts to be as you state them, which I am not prepared to admit, but for argument sake granting they were, what would it prove? Only that the

cardinals sinned. If they made a true election, the man they elected, though he were a bad man, would still be really and truly Bishop of Rome and Pope; a true high priest as Caiaphas was, who, because he was the high priest, uttered a true prophecy. He would be in the position of the Scribes and Pharisees of whom our Lord said, 'All things whatsoever they shall say to you observe and do, but according to their works do ye not.' If a bad man was elected Pope after Pius IX., we should be very sorry, but we should obey him, for we believe firmly in the promises of Christ, and that even if a bad man were elected Pope he would be prevented by the Holy Spirit from teaching error, just as the Jewish priests, though bad men, told the truth to the wise men; as Pilate was compelled to place the true inscription on the Cross; as Balaam was compelled to utter a blessing and not a curse. If you reject the papacy because some popes were bad you say, you ought to reject the College of Apostles because Judas once belonged to it."

"But how can you believe that the Holy

Spirit guides all the Popes to teach truth when it is well known that some of them have condemned the acts and denied the titles of their predecessors?"

"Can you tell me what Popes you allude to? What acts? What titles? what predecessors?"

"I cannot trust to my memory on the subject, and I have not books here to refer to; but I am certain that such instances occur in history."

"If you had adduced the facts, we could examine each on its own merits. As it is, I must answer in another way. Now what follows from the fact that a Pope condemns the act of his predecessor? The answer to that question depends on the nature of the act condemned. If, for instance, a Pope said, 'I think my predecessor acted too severely in such and such a case, or yielded too much to Napoleon the First, or was in too great a hurry to restore the English hierarchy;' such condemnations as these would prove nothing. We are not required to believe that every act of a Pope is the best thing he could have done."

"But what becomes, then, of the Papal infallibility?"

"If one Pope was to condemn a doctrine taught by his predecessor; if the Popes were to contradict one another on matters of doctrine as your bishops do, then it would certainly result that they could not be infallible. At the same time it would not prove that they are not the supreme authority in the government of the Church. There are Catholics who hold that the Pope may err even in doctrine, but that the Church in council cannot; but they do not on that account deny the Papal supremacy in government. If you can prove that one Pope has condemned the doctrine of another, it would show that a Council is wanted to decide doctrines; but it does not show at all that the Pope is not the head of the Church. We maintain that he is appointed by our Lord as its supreme pastor and ruler. Both the sheep and the lambs were committed to St. Peter's care. Every bishop and priest must submit to one authority in order that the Church may be one in government. But, mind you, I do not believe that you can

show by history a single instance in which a Pope has condemned a doctrine really taught by his predecessor."

"I am certain such instances exist."

"It is difficult to carry on this sort of discussion without books to refer to; but there is another point that must be taken into consideration. There have been, at different times, pretenders to the Papacy, many of whom were not really Popes at all, though they took the name. It might, therefore, very well happen that a Pope might condemn the acts and title of his predecessors—that is to say, of men who had taken the title, but were not popes at all."

The conversation was at that moment interrupted by the sound of a knock at the door. The instant afterwards a servant came in to say Mr. Nilson had called, and wished to speak to Mr. Derwent. Nothing could be less agreeable to Edgar than to receive this visit just then. He did not like to introduce Mr. Neville to his brother clergyman, or Mr. Nilson to him; but there was no help for it. The room was rather dark, and Edmund's Roman collar was concealed by a

comforter he had forgotten to take off, the visitor did not recognize in him the Romish priest he had sometimes met in the streets.

Mr. Nilson had been seized with a sudden hoarseness which prevented him from raising his voice above a whisper.

"You see," he said, sitting down in the arm-chair Edgar had placed for him, "that I am quite incapacitated for to-morrow's duties. May I hope, dear sir, that you will have the kindness to read the service and preach for me?"

An imperceptible smile hovered on Mr. Neville's lips. What a singular idea of duty it seemed, that two men, each fully convinced that the other held dangerous errors, should think it right to undertake by turns the instruction of their fellow-Christians. Edgar did not at all like the idea of officiating in what he had sometimes petulantly called Mr. Nilson's conventicle; but when it came to the point, he did not quite see how he could refuse. Anglican scruples are very apt to vanish at the touch of realities. It has been, for instance, sometimes intimated to Dissenters not to expect to receive the Sacra-

ment at a high Anglican altar, and then a relative or friend who chances to be a Presbyterian, or an Irvingite, may happen to be staying with the clergyman, and the duty of excluding heretics from Communion does not seem stringent enough to weigh against the fear of a family quarrel, or the amiable dread of giving pain to a loved friend, by the pointed manifestation of Church principles. It would have been unkind to refuse Mr. Nilson's request, and difficult, especially before Mr. Neville, to enter into the subject of their religious differences. Besides, as he had gone to his chapel for the service, he could not well allege any good reason for refusing to do the duty. So he said he would do what he was asked, and was warmly thanked for his assent. Mr. Nilson then said, "It is very fortunate indeed for my little flock that you should have happened to be here just now, Mr. Derwent. They are most of them pious Christians who would greatly miss the privilege of public worship on the Sabbath-day, and I should have particularly regretted the necessity of closing the chapel to-morrow, as I have reason to hope that three or four

women, natives of this place, and a very superior young man, whom I hope, when he is converted, may become a Scripture-reader, will attend the service."

Mr. Neville bit his lip, and Edgar coloured.

"They are really very interesting inquirers. One of the women, though she cannot read, accepted a Bible. She said she supposed it would do her some good; and though this may be a somewhat superstitious idea, there is something pleasing in it. When we have an Italian Scripture-reader he can read and expound to her the Holy Scriptures."

Edgar devoutly wished Mr. Nilson had not almost, but entirely, lost his voice, and said, in a quick manner, "I cannot think it can be right to perplex the minds and disturb the faith of these poor people. I am told they are good and pious, innocent and ignorant . . . ."

"Ay!" groaned Mr. Nilson, "utterly ignorant of Gospel truths. Worshippers of the Madonna!"

"Not so ignorant as to religion, I suspect," Edgar replied, "as some of our own

poor people. From what I hear, you would not easily find among these poor peasants persons who had never heard of God and Jesus Christ, unbaptized children, and baptized men and women dying like dogs without a thought of God, and of eternity. I am not a Romanist . . . ."

"God forbid!" ejaculated Mr. Nilson.

"But I should shudder at the thought of shaking the faith of a poor Roman Catholic who belongs to the Church of Christ, and believes everything necessary to salvation. I should think it a sin for which I should be called to account on the day of judgment."

Mr. Nilson looked aghast. "But, my dear sir, is it no object to make these poor souls acquainted with the saving truths of the Gospel? To show them the way of salvation? To place the Bible before their blind eyes . . . ."

"If they are blind how are they to read?" Mr. Neville murmured.

Edgar heard him, but not Mr. Nilson, who was rather deaf, as well as hoarse.

"My dear Mr. Derwent," he continued, "If Papists are not in a very dangerous state,

then we have no business to be Protestants. Then the glorious Reformation was a sin, and the immortal Luther an enemy, instead of a benefactor, of mankind; and we had better return again as fast as we can to the Church of Rome. But I say she is idolatrous, and wicked in her principles, though God forbid I should say so of all her members, who are better than their doctrines; but we must try and snatch as many souls as we can from her bondage, and restore them to the blessed freedom of the Gospel. She keeps the Bible from the laity —she will not allow the Scriptures to be read. It was only the other day that one of the priests here wanted to take away a Bible I had given him from the young man I was speaking of just now. . . . ."

"A convert to your Church?" Mr. Neville asked.

"Yes, he is about to abjure the errors of Rome, and to marry an English young lady, who would never have accepted a Papist for her husband."

"A satisfactory conversion!" Edgar remarked, in a low voice.

"We are about to establish a central depôt of Bibles on this coast, and to organize a general system for evangelizing the inhabitants of the towns and the villages. We hope to receive large subscriptions from England for this purpose, and the various Bible Societies promise to aid us. I am happy to say that we have already made some progress, though not so great as we could wish. The people are so bigoted and the influence of the priests still so great. Very few of them will declare themselves Protestants, and actually join our pure and holy Church; but I have noticed if not here, at least in some other places, satisfactory symptoms. Some of those who have accepted our Bibles and tracts, and the little charitable assistance we can give them, have begun to eat meat on Fridays, and declare they do not care for what the priests say. And on the day of the Corpus Christi procession at Bosco Nero, some of them were actually standing with their hats on when the Host was carried by. This was a great comfort to me. It seemed a proof that Protestant truth is beginning to make its way into these beau-

tiful regions by means of the gospel teaching of our dear Reformed Church. It was very consoling indeed."

At this point Mr. Nilson's voice fairly broke down. He had gasped out the last words with a strangling energy which exhausted its small power.

Edgar's eyes met those of the Catholic priest, and with heightened colour, and in an excited manner he exclaimed, "All I can say is, that I utterly reject your views of the teachings of our Church. I entirely disagree with your opinions, and abhor the disrespect to the Blessed Sacrament which you speak of. What you call gospel truth I consider as downright heresy, and I deny that our Church teaches it."

Mr. Nilson, making an effort to recover his voice, murmured, "And you call yourself a Protestant clergyman!"

"I do not call myself any such thing."

"Good heavens! Mr. Derwent!"

"I consider that those who speak and act as you do, are the worst enemies of our Church. I beg your pardon. Excuse me.

I did not mean to speak so strongly. Forgive me."

Such an expression of pain had passed over the face of the older clergyman, so unmixed with resentment, so sad and so perplexed, that Edgar felt remorse at the violence with which he had expressed himself. Mr. Nilson sighed deeply, and said, "Alas! what will be the fate of our Reformed Church, for three hundred years the stronghold and bulwark of Protestantism, when her own ministers can use such language. My dear friend! you still have the Bible in your hands; you read it, I am sure, every day with prayer; while that is the case you cannot long be seduced by dangerous errors. That is my hope and my reliance."

Mr. Neville then said in a voice which this time reached Mr. Nilson's ear, "Is it your belief, my dear sir, that if any one reads the Bible every day with a true and earnest desire to know and do God's will, that he will be guided into all truth?"

Mr. Nilson rather suspected that the person who was addressing him was a Catholic, and the thought crossed his mind,

"Perhaps my words have struck him. He might be disposed to accept a Bible. I wish I had brought one with me." However, he answered, "I have not the slightest doubt of it. Only try, my dear friend, and after a while the truths of the gospel will be made clear to you; you will feel an assurance of salvation, and your soul will pass from darkness into light."

Mr. Neville answered, "For more than a year I studied the Bible every day, beseeching God with prayers and with tears to make his truth and his will known to me. The more I read and the more I prayed the more I became convinced that there is but one Church appointed by Him to teach truth with authority to men, and that is the Roman Catholic Church. I abjured Protestantism, became a Catholic, and in course of time a priest. I have continued to read the Bible every day, and I have found day by day my faith strengthened, and my reason more and more convinced. I look back on the past and compare it with the present, and if I would I could no longer doubt. The Bible has done this for me. It

has done so for thousands in our own day and our own land. I would fain add, may it do so for you both, who, like the knights disputing by the two-faced shield, are ministers of a two-faced Church, which you appeal to with equal right and equal hopelessness."

"But the Bible," shrieked out Mr. Nilson, "the Bible cannot teach Roman Catholicism. It teaches Protestantism!"

Mr. Neville could not help smiling. "It has taught me Catholicism. It teaches you Calvinism. It teaches Mr. Derwent Anglicanism. It teaches us all charity, I hope, and with that hope I will wish you good-night. Do not, I beg of you, come out into the cold."

When the two clergymen were left together, one of them thought, "It is these Evangelicals who drive people out of our Church;" and the other, "It is those Puseyites who lure our people to Rome."

"I must go home too," Mr. Nilson said, "it is getting late, I am really very much obliged to you about the duty to-morrow; I suppose . . . . that you will not touch in your sermon on anything extreme?"

"No," Edgar answered, "but if any of

your neophytes are present, I do not know how I can refrain from advising them not to be in a hurry to forsake their Church."

"You do not mean that you would stop the work of grace?"

"Oh no, not any work of grace," Edgar impatiently answered. "But, indeed, as I presume they do not understand English, it cannot much signify as far as they are concerned, what I say or do not say. What good do you think it can do those people to come and sit by whilst the English Service is read? Surely those who blame the Church of Rome for using an unknown tongue, should not encourage such an attendance as this in our Church."

"It accustoms them to stay away from Mass," Mr. Nilson answered, "and soon we hope to have an Italian Service for them."

When the door had closed on his brother clergyman, Edgar walked up and down the room trying to quiet his mind with the oft-repeated words—"In quietness and confidence shall be thy strength."

They might as well serve a man clinging to a sinking ship, and refusing to be rescued.

CHAPTER VII.

At eleven o'clock that same evening Edgar was writing, in his dressing-room, his sermon for the next day. He stopped short in the middle of his task, and looked into his wife's room. Seeing she was not asleep, he walked in, pen in hand. "It is dreadful," he said, "to be obliged to preach for that man, and in that wretched, conventicle-looking place."

"Then why do so, dearest?" Ita answered, as he sat down by her bed-side.

"We must do our duty when it is difficult and disagreeable as well as when it is easy and pleasant. Everything of the kind was full of satisfaction and pleasure at home. Here it is distasteful to the highest degree. But we must not deprive others of public worship to spare our own feelings."

"No; if it is clear that you ought to

officiate in Mr. Nilson's chapel, then, of course, you must. But I am glad I happen to have this cold just now, and shall like much better to read the Service at home, and the beautiful lines in the 'Christian Year' for this week, than to go to church to-morrow. By the way, you will have to look out for the least objectionable hymns in that horrid green book. Oh, darling Edgar, I do not at all like the idea of your preaching for Mr. Nilson, who says such dreadful things of Catholics. It is so difficult to me to think it can be right. It unsettles every notion of truth and falsehood; and, surely, if we ought to be true about anything, it is religion. Anglicanism is such a makeshift," she suddenly exclaimed, with a sort of desperation; "it is such a system of expedients to prove to ourselves and others that we are what nobody thinks us, and to make words express what they do not mean. Oh, Edgar, God cannot want this! Forgive me, but I felt as if I should suffocate if I did not speak out."

Edgar had turned pale, and looked sternly at his wife. He felt for the first time, and with the keenest pain, how much her con-

fidence in the Church of England had been shaken since she had been abroad; how little she had been able to resist what he called the fascinations of Roman Catholicism, and maintain her Church principles when they happened not to be fully carried out before her eyes. His fears were aroused, his feelings hurt, his iron will arrayed on the side of what he considered to be right. She had never spoken so plainly before, or expressed so openly what he could not bear to hear. He would speak plainly, also, half from a sense of duty, half from indignant passion. He had never before realized the possibility that his wife could ever take a different line from him about religion. Now it flashed upon him that other women had done so—women as gentle and submissive as Ita in all things else had been rebellious on this one point; and he resolved she should not go blindly forward in a fatal course—that she should know, before it was too late, what misery it would bring upon them both.

He took her hand in his, and said, slowly, fixing his eyes upon her with an intensity which made her close her own, "Ita, my own

darling Ita, my beloved wife, I have and do love you more tenderly, more ardently, than I have, perhaps, ever shown or expressed—more so, perhaps, than is right in one who has sworn to serve at God's altar. Because I loved you so much . . . ." He stopped, and his voice faltered. He thought of Annie, generous, devoted Annie, and of his faithlessness to her, but did not give utterance to that thought. He recovered himself, and did not finish his sentence. He did not tell Ita that for her sake he had suffered something very like remorse, but said, "No; I think it is impossible for any man to have loved a woman more intensely than I have loved you, and yet, if you were ever to forsake the Church of England, to deny by that act her Catholicity, to side with her scornful enemies, to turn publicly against me, and to proclaim to the world your belief that my orders are invalid, my ministrations void, my life a delusion, and my office a sham, then there would be an end to all our domestic happiness, and we should part. I cannot understand how an Anglican priest can keep by his side, in his house, and in his parish, a witness against his faith and

his Church. I would rather beg my bread with you than live in splendour without you. I would rather leave Holmwood for ever than separate from you; but my vows of fidelity to the Church of my baptism preceded my marriage vows, and as I said, on a day which severed my fate from hers, who loved me well, though unrequitedly, 'He is no Christian who is not ready to cut off his hand or pluck out his eye rather than act against his conscience.' I should tear out my heart from my breast by parting with you, the darling and treasure of my life; but I would do so in that terrible case—yes, even if these eyes of mine were to weep themselves blind after thrusting you from me."

He knelt down by the side of the bed, and hid his face on the counterpane. Poor Ita looked on that beloved head; she laid her cold, nervous little hand on the thick brown hair she was so fond of. She thought of those eyes, which the least ray of light hurt, which tears would fatally injure—of Annie and Holmwood abandoned for her sake, for her, the nameless child that had crossed his path and spoiled his destiny. She looked up

to heaven with a mute appeal, an intense longing for a sign from the great, powerful, invisible, silent Lord of Creation and Redemption. She sent up that cry for light which so many utter in these days from the depths of an agonizing perplexity.

The time was not yet come when that prayer was to receive its answer. She turned again her eyes towards her husband, and, as she bent over him, murmured, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!" She, too, sought to still the voice of the charmer by a text of Scripture. Edgar looked up into her face. She threw her arms round his neck and sobbed on his shoulder. "Never, never can I leave you," she cried. "What you believe I must believe; what you hope I must hope, even against hope; where you are I must be, in life and in death. Who am I that I should dare to separate myself from you, who first led me to God and are a thousand times nearer to Him than I am?" Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes sparkling. She was clinging to him as if the idea of separation stood like a spectre by their side, ready to thrust itself

between their two hearts, which were then beating close to each other. "Shall I promise you," she suddenly exclaimed, "never to be a Roman Catholic?"

Edgar started. He saw there was something like desperation in her manner; he shrunk from accepting from her this promise. "No, darling," he said, tenderly kissing her forehead, "no, do not make any promises; but I now feel sure you never will be one. You would not break my heart, and throw a dark shade over the whole of my life? Drive away, banish such a thought as a dreadful temptation. To use your own misapplied words, my own wife, 'This cannot be what God wants.'"

She kissed his hand over and over again before he left her to finish his sermon. She resolved when he was gone never to leave the Church of England. She said to herself, as her head fell back on the pillow, "No, God does not want it of me." And yet Edgar's own words were haunting her all the time. The hand cut off, the eye plucked out, the heart torn from the bosom, rather than not obey the voice

of conscience. But what did conscience command?

This, this is the question, the harassing doubt, the terrible uncertainty which distracts so many souls in Ita's position. God answers it in his own day, in his own hour—sometimes by a still, soft voice, heard in silent prayer; sometimes by the slow, gradual clearing away of doubts, like that of a mist on the morning of a sunny day; sometimes by a sudden burst of light, flooding the astonished soul; sometimes in grief, sometimes in joy; sometimes by words like those St. Paul heard on the road to Damascus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Sometimes by the simple "Follow Me," addressed to the fishermen and the publican. It comes at last, that answer, when the struggle is perhaps at its height, and despair seems at hand; when the mind is weary with thinking; when to pray is too great an effort; when we are about to murmur, and to say to God what He said to Saul, "Why persecutest thou me?" Then, one day, his divine hand beckons us on. The suffering has not

ceased, the doubts seem scarcely to have vanished, but the struggle is ended. We cannot go back. We see behind us nothing real, consistent, and true. Before us what is there? We hardly know; but we have a strong hope, almost a faith, that beyond the veil which hides from us the unseen there lies a whole world of peace and strength; and we press on, though we feel it to be a venture. "Oh, my God! I thank Thee that I made that venture!" * * *

* * * * * *

About a fortnight or three weeks after this conversation, in the early days of February, which had brought with it cloudless skies and soft air, Edgar proposed to make an excursion along the coast as far as San Remo. Ita was delighted with the idea. To be alone with her husband was, more than ever, what she enjoyed. The interruptions to their solitude at the villa had not, indeed, been frequent, but both of them now rather dreaded visits, whether from Edmund Neville or Mr. and Mrs. Nilson. The former did not press any controversy upon them; but there is always some little embarrassment in seeing

much of a person whose mind is occupied with the same subjects as our own, and yet those subjects are on both sides avoided. It is often easier to carry on an ordinary intimacy when there is a total absence of sympathy, than where a constant temptation occurs to broach subjects of common interest, but bordering on dangerous ground.

Ita also liked the thoughts of spending a Sunday at San Remo, which was then quite uninvaded by strangers. She and Edgar would go to no church, but read the Service together on the sea-shore, or in a shady spot in the woods. During a whole week she should talk only with him; hear hardly any voice but his. They would be out of doors all day. It would be like a second honeymoon. She was unconsciously making her love for her husband her religion, and the grey olive-groves, with the blue vault of heaven for its dome, was the fittest temple for that worship.

There was, however, another consideration that made her eagerly look forward to this little journey. They would pass through Spedaletti, the sea-coast village where she

had spent her infancy. She had not ventured to speak to Edgar of her wish to go there. She did not feel sure he would like it. He was always kind when she alluded to the peculiarity of her fate, but it was not a subject he was inclined to dwell upon, and her sensitive consciousness of this reluctance had prevented her from expressing her desire to visit that spot. Now, however, it would come about in a natural manner, and she prepared with great eagerness for the excursion. Edgar was to walk and she to ride on a donkey. They were to take nobody with them, but a boy. A carpet-bag and a light box held all their baggage. They intended to sleep the first night at Ventimiglia, the second at Bordighiera, the third at San Remo.

When they set out the weather had been perfectly settled for some days. Everything was bright and lovely as sunshine and spring could make it, for February when it is fine is spring on that coast. The almond-trees were already covered with their pink blossoms which mingle beautifully with the silvery foliage of the olives. All was charming

except the dust which, when a diligence or voiture passed them, rose in a dense cloud of white powder. Sometimes they avoided the highroad, and followed a track along the hills, or went for a little while along the sea-shore.

At noon on the first day they stopped to rest the donkey and themselves, and to eat their luncheon under an ilex-tree in a gorge at the entrance of a valley. Ita took a childish pleasure in filling their gourds with water trickling from a rock. She was in the greatest spirits.

"I wonder," she said, "if it is selfish to like to have you all to myself; I want nobody else, not even the greatest friends." After a pause, she added: "How strangely intense enjoyment borders on pain. It makes me understand . . . ." She stopped short, it was what Mr. Neville had said about Purgatory that she was thinking of; "pain more intense than any earthly pain, yet joy at the same time." But she was afraid of disturbing the perfect bliss of that sunshiny hour by the mention of anything in which Edgar and her might not agree.

He smiled at her remark, and said, "How little Annie would enter into that feeling of yours!"

Ita laughed. "I can fancy her large eyes opening wide with that surprised look they have when I indulge in flights of fancy. What a dear kind letter that was we had from her last week, full of the news of home. It was so nice of her to tell us she had taken care to send plenty of flowers from the hothouse every Sunday for the altar, and that the children sung, 'Come, faithful, approach ye,' still better than last year. There was only one thing I wish she had not said."

"What was that?" Edgar asked, as he leant back against the tree, with his eyes half closed.

"That she had heard a very painful report, but would not mention it till she was quite certain of its truth. What was the use, in that case, of speaking of it at all? I cannot bear people *hinting* at news whether good or bad?"

"*Curiosity*, thy name is woman," Edgar said, laughing.

Meanwhile a troop of little ragged children had gathered round Ita, and were gazing with wistful eyes on the contents of her basket. The donkey-boy, who had already had his own dinner out of it, told them to go away, but she exclaimed:

"Oh, no; let us give them the sandwiches. We must keep the biscuits to fall back upon if we are starved on the way; but they can have these," and she distributed the contents of a paper bag amongst the wild little urchins, who in return gave her bunches of violets, periwinkles, and pink anemones. She asked them some questions, but their answers were incomprehensible. They spoke the patois of the Riviera, which is different from the Mentone dialect.

"We must resume our march," Edgar announced.

"Do ride the donkey for a while," she said, "and let me walk."

"Oh, dear no! little woman!" he answered, lifting her on the saddle. "I am not at all tired," and they went on, Edgar humming the old French Revolutionary song—

"En avant marchons
Contre leurs canons
À travers le fer le feu des Bataillons,
Courons à la victoire."

"I like still better than that," Ita said, "the Hymn of the Girondins. The refrain is so fine—

"'Mourir pour la patrie
C'est le sort le plus beau
Le plus digne d'envie.'"

"A false sentiment," Edgar remarked.

"You mean that to die for one's faith is more glorious?"

"Of course; who could compare the two?"

"Did you ever read Polyeucte?" Ita inquired.

"No; I could never endure French tragedies."

"Oh, I like some of Corneille's. Pauline in 'Les Martyrs' asks her lover, who is going to die because he is a Christian, if he loves her (she is a heathen, you know), and he answers—

"'Beaucoup moins que mon Dieu, mais bien plus que moi même.'"

"I like the idea, but I cannot say I care for the line."

"I wonder how one could have borne what people went through in the days of persecution."

"We need not speak of them in the past tense. In the Roman Catholic annals of the Propagation of the Faith, there are frequent accounts of the most dreadful martyrdoms in heathen countries. And I suppose the Catholics in Poland endure, at the hands of the Russian Government, the severest sufferings, moral and physical."

"It frightens me to think how ill I bear a toothache. How should I endure the rack?"

"I think what Mr. Neville was saying the other day is true, that God gives us strength to bear the trials He sends us, but not those we go through in imagination. When you think of martyrdom it is with the amount of courage you are naturally gifted with . . . ."

"And that is the smallest amount possible," she interrupted, with a smile. "I am not sure that I am not afraid of that hungry-looking dog, who is barking at us from the top of the cliff."

"Exactly so. Perhaps St. Agnes and St. Anatasia might have also been frightened at a yelping cur. When the trial comes, then the gift of strength comes, if we have faith."

"Ah, then, a toothache without a special grace to bear it may be worse than the thumb-screw with that grace. As St. Theresa said, when she was going to found a convent with eightpence, 'Theresa and eightpence are very little, but Theresa, eightpence, and Almighty God are a great deal.'"

"I did not know that you had been reading St. Theresa's works."

"Yes, Mrs. Sydney lent them to me the last time we were at Grantley Manor. She must have been, I think, the most charming person in the world, besides a great saint. Do you not wish? . . . ." Here the pathway became so narrow that Edgar could not keep by the side of the donkey, and Ita was left to her own thoughts. She was struck by what her husband had said about grace being given to us in proportion to present trials, and not to those we look forward to. Perhaps, then, we ought never to think that any effort or sacrifice would be too great for our

strength. Not even . . . ." There she felt it necessary to check the direction that thought was taking. It was better not to follow it up. The words "Mourir pour la patrie" kept, however, running in her mind. How strongly Edgar had spoken about dying for one's faith. How much more, then, ought one to suffer for it! That, too, was a dangerous subject of meditation, so, to divert her mind from it, she talked to Dominico, who kept in front of the donkey.

"Is your mother still alive?" she asked him.

"Yes, Signora, thanks to the Madonna di Lagheto. She went there last Trinity Sunday, and recovered the use of her limbs. Her crutches were left at the altar of the Madonna."

"Do people go there as much as ever?"

"Indeed, I should think they did, Signora. More than ever, I assure you."

"I remember one year that we stayed late in the summer at Mentone, seeing carts full of sick people with their friends on their way to Lagheto."

"To be sure, Signora, and no wonder,

seeing what great *grazzias* are obtained there. My mother's hip-joint was diseased for many years. She had been to see doctors at Nice, but they all said it was a hopeless case; that she would never be better. *Porcrina*, she cried a whole day after they had told her so. But my aunt, who is a holy woman, always praying, said, 'If I was you, Marina, I would go to Lagheto,' and my father hired a cart, and took her there himself. There was an immense crowd, so many carts and tents all round the convent that they could hardly get near enough for her to hobble to the church on crutches. They had to carry her at last, and hoist her over the heads of the crowd to bring her near the Madonna's altar. After she had said a prayer, she felt a strange pain in all her limbs, as if something had happened to her. This was the *grazzia*, Signora. She left her crutches behind, and walked back all the way home. She has been quite well ever since, and is almost as great a saint now as my aunt. We shall all go to Lagheto at the Trinity this year to thank the Madonna."

"People go there from a great distance?"

"To be sure they do. From Alassio and

Savona, and even from Genoa, and from the mountains, too, in great numbers. They have done so for hundreds of years, and will do so, I think, till the day of judgment. The Madonna is so good."

"What is that about the Madonna?" Edgar asked, as they all turned again from the pathway into the highroad.

Ita repeated to him in English what Dominico had said. He shook his head. "Always the Madonna!"

"But, Edgar, if our Lord chooses to work miracles at his mother's request, why should you object to it?"

"*If* He does, but does He? That is the question."

"I cannot help believing He does, for would it not be most extraordinary that for hundreds of years thousands and thousands of persons, at great trouble and inconvenience to themselves, should travel long distances, carrying sick people with them to a particular place, in order to obtain a miraculous cure, when no such miraculous cures were ever obtained? It would be such a strange delusion."

"Strange, indeed, but unfortunately there is a great tendency in ignorant persons to entertain this sort of delusions."

"But, dearest Edgar, why do you smile in that kind of pitying, scornful way?"

"My darling, I really find it difficult to discuss this question seriously. It is so absurd. These are exactly the sort of things that are so objectionable in Roman Catholicism. The priests encourage the people in these superstitions."

"But now, just listen to me, dearest. Why is it superstitious in these people to believe that when they go with faith and ask of God to cure themselves or their friends . . . ."

"Not God, the Madonna."

"But, dear Edgar, you know they believe that it is only by God's power at the Madonna's request that they are cured." She turned to Dominico, and asked him in Mentonese—"Could the Blessed Virgin have cured your mother without the help of her Divine Son?"

"Certainly not, Signora; but what she asks Him to do He never refuses."

"He says just what I said, Edgar; and I

want you just to tell me why is it now absurd to think that miracles take place, when it is right to believe they happened some hundred years ago?"

"There is not the same occasion for them now?"

"Well, dearest, it seems to me that there is great occasion for them now, when there are so many infidels and unbelievers. And how can we judge if they are necessary or not? How can we decide about that? The Roman Catholics say they have never ceased in the Church."

"A belief in modern miracles is not an article of faith with them."

"No, but they all, most of them at least, think they do happen sometimes now. But whether they do take place or not, what is there absurd in believing they do? The early Christians used to cure sick people with handkerchiefs the apostles had touched, and laid them in the streets that the shadow of St. Peter might fall upon them."

"St. Peter was an apostle."

"But if the shadow of an apostle could work a miracle, why not the image of God's

mother? or why not the relics of his saints?"

"I remember a discussion on that question some years ago at Holmwood. I think Mr. Hendon took your side of the argument."

"That is what he would be sure to do. He says, it puts him out of all patience to hear people who say they believe every word of the Bible, all the miracles in the Old and New Testament—the story about Balaam's ass speaking, for instance, and then laugh at Roman Catholics for saying that miracles sometimes happen now. It is so inconsistent. If God could work wonders two thousand years ago, why is it ridiculous to think He does so now? Please, Edgar, please, tell me that you see some truth in what I say?"

Edgar smiled. "Well, Pussy, I will admit the possibility, though I cannot believe in all these modern miracles."

"Oh, I dare say there are often mistakes about them, but I am glad you admit they are possible."

They had by this time arrived near Ventimiglia—the old castellated towers frowned upon them from their picturesque heights,

and there they spent the night at a very poor osteria, and were obliged to have recourse to Ita's biscuits, their evening meal having proved anything but satisfactory.

The day's journey from Ventimiglia to Bordighiera was not so pleasant as the preceding one. The sun was hotter and the wind colder, the dust more constantly annoying, and the deviations from the highroad seldom practicable. Edgar looked weary, but nothing would induce him to ride the donkey, or to own he was tired. Ita was much occupied with the idea that on the morrow they would pass through Spedaletti. She had not yet mentioned to her husband her wish to halt there, and to stroll about the place in search of old recollections. She did not think he would understand her wishing it so much. Yet nobody cared more for old associations than he did. Nobody was more attached than he was to particular places. But it did not follow that he would sympathize with her feelings of the sort; he was not selfish, for the moment he saw that an action was right or kind, he would never omit to perform it, but he did not easily

conceive that what did not interest him could interest others. Ita, from the first moment of their acquaintance, had entered so fully into everything that was of importance and pleasure to him, that he had never realized that she could have desires and inclinations apart from his. The strongest love does not always insure that sympathy will be shown when the person who feels it has what is called in French *un caractère entier*, which does not mean either a proud, or a selfish, or a self-sufficient one, in the bad sense of the word, but implies a self-concentration that makes everything circle round itself, and fancies it sympathizes with others when it merely accepts their sympathy. Ita had, on the other hand, one of those natures which recoils from a cold look or word as others would from a blow, and though very impulsive she was also reserved from an instinctive dread of the pain which anything like a repulse gave her. She felt that Edgar would not care about the faint reminiscences of the days of her infancy, and at one moment she almost resolved to ride through Spedaletti without alluding to them.

In the evening, however, as they were walking in the garden just outside the town, a famous one for its fine palm-trees, she took courage, and said—

"I should like so much to stop to-morrow at Spedaletti, and walk about a little there. It is the place where I lived before Lady Emily adopted me."

"Do we go through it?" Edgar asked. "I fancied it was on the other side of San Remo. Certainly, we can stop there if you wish it. Have you been there since your infancy?"

"We passed through it twice on our way to Genoa, but as Lady Emily never spoke of the time before I lived with her, I did not venture to say anything about it."

"But what do you want to do there? You cannot remember anybody, I suppose? Those old people who took care of you are dead, you told me."

"Yes; but I want to look at the cottage I lived in, and perhaps I could make some of the people recollect my being there."

"And what will be the use of that, my darling?"

"I do not suppose it will be of any use," she answered, pressing his arm against her heart, "but it will be one of those strange pleasures we can hardly account for."

"Then by all means we will stop there; but I think it very likely you will see nothing as you remember it. Childish recollections are so confused."

They went to rest early, after enjoying a pink sunset and a rising moon, which illumined with its silvery light the low flat shore, and the fanciful forms of the feathery palm-trees. Nothing could be more primitive than the accommodation to be found at that time in the little towns on the Corniche road. The food was insufficient and bad—the beds hard—the pillows like stones,—the odours unpoetical; but they were neither of them fastidious, and nothing of that sort destroyed their enjoyment.

The next day, Ita awoke full of excitement, her heart beating at the prospect of the halt they were to make at Spedaletti. She could hardly think of anything else.

"How dreamy you are this morning," Edgar remarked, when he had been twice

obliged to call her to look at a picturesque group of girls drawing water at a fountain opposite their osteria. She started, and came to the window.

"Is not the donkey saddled yet?" she exclaimed, as she perceived that patient individual standing in the court, without any appearance that Dominico was thinking of getting him ready for his daily work.

"Why are you in such a hurry?" Edgar asked, forgetting that the coming day was an interesting one to her.

She made no answer then, but a moment afterwards she went to the breakfast-table, and said, "I think I will put these eggs in my basket; they are already almost cold. At Spedaletti we shall probably find nothing to eat."

"Oh, by the way, you mean to rest there. I advise you to tell Dominico to let you know when we get to it, for I should not be surprised if you did not recognize the place."

Ita informed the donkey-boy of their desire, and the party started. It seemed to Ita as if they creeped instead of walked up

and down the hills, and she looked at every turn of the road with eager anxiety to see if they were yet in sight of the little village.

"Is that Spedaletti?" she asked at last, as by the eastern side of one of the sheltered and sunny bays she saw a few houses close to the sea, and some fishermen's boats on the sand.

"Si, Signora," Dominico answered. "But there is no decent inn there," he added, shrugging his shoulders, "and nothing to see at all."

"Do you know anybody there?"

"Oh, dear no," he replied, contemptuously, "they are all *poverissima gente*."

When they approached the first ruinous, miserable-looking building, which bore that peculiar look of neglect which belongs to very poor Italian villages, he asked where they wished to stop.

"Here," she said, "I wish to get down here," and she jumped off the donkey, and went to meet Edgar.

"What do you want to do, love?" he said. "Is this the place? Can I help you in any way?"

"No, dearest," she answered, pulling out her watch. "Give me an hour all to myself; that is what I shall like best. Suppose you go and sit and read, in that empty boat in the shade of the larger vessel, while I stroll about and speak to some of the people."

"Do not overheat yourself. Have you got the umbrella?"

"Yes," she said.

He bent down and kissed her forehead, and she walked slowly on.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ita's wish, though she had not mentioned it to Edgar, was, in the first instance, to walk to the little church where she had been baptized. She had a very distinct recollection of it, and of the lights on the altar, and the priest's vestments, and of having made, one day, a sudden dart at a piece of orange-peel on the pavement, and been roughly snatched up and replaced on the bench. It was not far off, and she went there; but it was noon, and the door was locked. Two little grated windows on each side allowed her, however, to look inside. It was just as she remembered it, only, of course, much smaller. Then she went to the nearest house where any one seemed stirring, for most of them were shut up like the church, almost everybody being out at work. She found

one woman washing, and asked her if she had known Giovanni Piombo and his wife. She spoke first in Italian, and was not understood. Then she tried Mentonese with a little more success; but she could not get a positive answer. "*Sicuro, sicuro,*" the woman said; but when she inquired for the house where they used to live, she only got the same reply, "*Sicuro,*" and nothing came of it.

She wandered about the place, sometimes fixing on one cottage and then on another, as the one she had inhabited, but could not make out anything certain. She almost cried with vexation, though she felt it was foolish, and was just going back to the place where she had left Edgar, when she saw a priest coming towards the church. He was the *paroco* of Colla, a town on the hill above Spedaletti, which belonged also to his parish.

Ita took courage, and went up to him. "Excuse me," she said, in Italian, "but will your Reverence have the kindness to tell me whether you knew Giovanni Piombo, a fisherman of this place, and which of these houses he lived in?"

"Giovanni Piombo," the priest repeated, stroking his chin thoughtfully. "*Sicuro*—but he has been dead these ten years."

"I know he is dead," she answered; "but where did he and his wife live?"

"A little way to the left, Signora—nearer the Marina. It was a poor cottage then, and now it is used as a shed by the men who mend the road. You are not the first person who has made inquiries about that poor *defunto*. A Signora came to see me some time ago—I think, from Mentone—to ask about him, and I have also had a letter from a lady in England. Are you of that country, Signora?"

"Yes," Ita answered, blushing a little. "I have lately come from England."

"Oh, then, no doubt you must know her. If I had her letter with me I would show it to you."

"Was the name Hendon?"

"No, no. It begins with a D. Dal—Dalass—that is it."

"What did she want to know about Giovanni Piombo? Excuse me for asking, but you said, just now, you would have

shown me the letter if you had had it with you."

"And so I would. Can you come to my house at Colla?"

"I am afraid I can't."

"Oh, then, I can tell you what is in it. She wished me to write to her the exact date of the day when Piombo picked up at sea a child, whom an English lady at Mentone afterwards adopted."

"And were you able to tell her?"

"Not the precise date of the day, but the year and the month; for I baptized the child myself; and I sent her the extract from the register." A sudden idea struck the *paroco*. "Is it, by any chance, the Signora Dalass I am speaking to?"

"No—but . . . ." Ita stopped short. She was afraid Edgar would not like her to tell the priest that it was her he had baptized in her infancy. So she began again. "No, I am not that lady, and I know nothing about her."

"Excuse me," the *paroco* rejoined; "I fancied you might be the Signora who wrote the letter."

"What place did she write from?"

"Thomas Street, in London; and there is a number, too, and something else besides London, which I forget."

"Did you not say that another lady came from Mentone to speak to you about Giovanni Piombo?"

"Ah! she was not a grand lady, that poor soul; but so good, so humble, so pious! *Povera donna!* she walked on crutches, and looked very ill. She told me her history. She had met with a terrible accident at sea, a great many years ago, and been nearly drowned. Her child was drowned, and she has never got over it. She said she had been out of her mind for some years, from a blow she had received on the head; and the pain of the heart, too, she added. *Poverina!* For a long time she was in a hospital or asylum at Genoa. At last she got better, and returned to Mentone, her native place. The people there told her that an English lady had adopted a girl which Giovanni Piombo had found in a boat at sea, and had taken her away to England with her. So she must go and take it into her head that

this must have been her child, and off she comes to me here to ask about it. But she had no clear idea when she had lost her infant, or how long she had been at the asylum, or of her own age. Some of her relatives told her one thing, and others differently. Her husband died, she said, just before that unlucky voyage, and that had begun to unsettle her mind. I am not sure that she is even now quite right in the head. Perhaps the whole thing is a *pazzia*—a delusion."

"Do you know if she is now at Mentone, and if so, where she lives?"

"Ah, no, Signora; I cannot tell you. I never saw her but that once. But it is strange that three different persons should have come to me with the same question. Can I do anything for you, Signora?"

"No, thank you," Ita answered, for she could not think at that moment what more she had to ask either about Mrs. Dallas or the poor woman at Mentone. She felt frightened at the idea that what she had sometimes in imagination sighed for, might actually come to pass, that she might discover who she was. Since her marriage she

had ceased to crave for that knowledge, and the very idea of it now made her so nervous that, after taking leave of the priest, she was obliged to sit down a moment on the stone bench outside the church to try and think calmly on what he had said. A number of possible eventualities were passing through her mind, and she, whose greatest fear was always a perplexity, saw before her a future complication comprising some most difficult and painful questions. Her susceptible conscience and almost morbid tender-heartedness were already beginning to reproach her for the sudden dread which she felt of finding a parent in the poor woman the *paroco* had mentioned, and the wish she was conscious of, that no proof should be brought forward of it, if such should be the fact. Was not this mean, unnatural, and wrong? and yet do what she would, her heart sank within her at the thought of such a discovery. Then who could Mrs. Dallas be? Was it possible that Mrs. Gerald had written under that name? The direction given in the letter threw no light on the subject.

If there had been time for it she would

have liked to have gone to Colla, and asked to see the letter, but Edgar was waiting and she could not tell him in a hurry what she had heard. She must first think over it. Perhaps, if he had no objection, they might stop there on their way back.

She slowly walked to the shore where she had left her husband. All the pleasurable excitement of the previous hours had vanished. The very beauty of the view had lost its attractions. It seemed to her as if there was a snare in its loveliness. England, Holmwood, the Vicarage rose before her, and she longed to find herself at home—safe at home, she unconsciously said to herself. The moral suffering that might be impending on her almost seemed to her excited feelings like a physical danger. It would be so dreadful if she found a mother she should not be able to love. She could not fancy anything more painful, and she was angry with herself for dreading to discover that she was the child of a poor woman. It would be so difficult to realize the relationship. There never was a more sudden reaction. For the moment she disliked the sight of the blue sea and the olive woods.

She had taken such a childish pleasure in the idea of seeing this place again, and now she was impatient to get away from it.

Edgar was struck with her paleness, "Are you not feeling well, darling?" he said, looking anxiously in her face.

"A little tired," she said, "but let us go on. Riding," she added, forcing a smile, "is the best rest after walking."

"Have you walked far?"

"No, a very short distance."

"You had better have some luncheon; sit down here."

She obeyed, and he opened the basket. She burst into tears.

"What on earth is the matter, my dearest love?" he exclaimed.

She hid her face in her hands.

"Who have you been talking to, Ita? What nonsense it was to stop here," he said, half-anxious, half-provoked.

"I did not mean to tell you about it till I had thought more, but I must, I cannot help it. I have seen the priest of this place, or rather of Colla, there on the height . . . ."

"Has he been talking to you about

religion?" Edgar asked, his eyes flashing, and the colour rushing into his face.

"Oh no, not a word, though it was he, indeed, who baptized me. But I did not tell him who I was . . . . Oh, Edgar, would you love me less if I turned out to be the child of a poor Mentonese woman?"

She again covered her face with her hands.

He answered very calmly, "My darling, if you turned out to be the hangman's daughter, I might regret the discovery, but I should not love you a bit the less. But is this a sudden fancy you have taken into your head, or have you heard anything that has given you this idea?"

"I have heard something but it is very vague."

"Of one thing you can be quite sure, nothing of that sort could ever make a difference in my feelings towards you. You did not think it could, did you, you foolish little woman?"

"It is very dear of you to say so," Ita said, looking brighter.

"But what has this priest been telling you?"

"A lady whose name he pronounced Dalass, I think it must be Dallas, wrote to him some time ago to inquire about the time when I was found and all about me—me as a baby, I mean. By the way, I forgot to ask him if she seemed to know my name and where I was now. If you like," Ita added, hesitatingly, "I could see him again and ask him?"

"I do not see any use in it. Is that all?"

"No; some time before a poor woman came from Mentone also to ask about me. She had been out of her mind for some years, after a shipwreck, or some accident at sea, in which she had lost her baby, and when she heard that I had been found in the way I was, she thought I might be her child . . . . and, Edgar, perhaps I am?"

"Is that all?" Edgar asked again.

"Yes; I think that is all."

"Then, my love, I advise you not to let your mind dwell a moment on the subject. Any poor crazy woman, whose child has been drowned on this coast, might take the same idea into her head. It would be as natural

for her to do so, as impossible for others to draw any inference from the facts."

"She only inquired, he said, and did not seem to remember, herself, anything distinctly about dates."

"Of course not. The notion is preposterous. But I am sorry we stopped here. I am sorry we came abroad. I am always afraid of your letting your mind run on conjectures as to what it is not apparently God's will you should know."

"I think I ought to try and find out this woman at Mentone when we go back. Should you mind?"

"I think it would be foolish—still, if you wish it . . . ." Edgar smiled; this was a relief to her. She felt so very nervous.

"Well," he said, gaily, "we will see about that. I am tolerably certain I shall know at first sight if this good woman is my mother-in-law or not."

"You know one cannot trust to likenesses."

"I do not agree with you there. I cannot remember ever having seen a daughter not

like her mother in some one point of face, figure, or voice."

"I am very glad that you do not object to my trying to find out that poor woman. She is lame—walks on crutches, the priest said. Though it is as you say, probably quite impossible to be at all sure about it, I should like, *in case*, just in the most distant improbable case, to do something to make her comfortable. I could ask the Abate Giovanni to look after her. And I should like to kiss her once, *in case*. I often kiss the Italian poor people. It would not seem odd, and then I could . . . ."

"Come, come, you have not found her yet," Edgar said, laughing. "I do not object to your *in cases*, or your kissing all the old women in Mentone, if you like, provided you are sensible, and do not allow your imagination to run wild, or else I shall carry you back to England at once."

"Oh! do not," she exclaimed; "I shall be more satisfied to see this poor woman. But I will not bore you with any more talk about that."

She had some luncheon, and told Edgar

that the palms on the opposite side of the bay, and the dates she was eating, put her in mind of Mrs. Heman's lines:—

> "Is it where the feathery palm trees rise,
> And the date grows ripe under sunny skies?"

He answered that those she had in her basket had been ripened by a more burning sun than that which was then making the wavelets and the pale foliage of the olive-trees glitter like silver.

As they rode up the hill which rises above Spedaletti, Ita went off into a burst of enthusiasm about Mrs. Heman's poetry, and asked Edgar if he did not think there was an unconscious Catholicism about it. "I always think," she said, "that even when she means to be a thorough Protestant, there is a spirit in her which compels her to be Catholic. Don't you remember, in the 'Forest Sanctuary,' that though she wanted to make the Spanish apostate interesting, as if in spite of herself, by far the most beautiful passage, is the one where his wife, who has not lost her faith, dies of a broken heart, while singing a hymn to the Blessed Virgin?"

"If she had lived twenty years later," Edgar answered, "I have no doubt she would have been an ardent advocate of the revival of Catholicism in our Church."

Ita did not answer; and, after a moment's silence, he said, as he looked at her hazel eyes, which had always a peculiarly beautiful expression when unspoken thoughts were passing through her mind, like light clouds over the sky, "Not a penny for your thoughts, but this wild heart's-ease for your dreams."

"Ah," she cried, "heart's-ease is worth buying! Well, I was thinking—it *was* a thought, not a dream—that most of our English modern poets, without being Catholics, write almost as if they were. My three favourite poems, for instance; I can hardly believe they were written by Protestants."

"Which do you mean? Oh, of course, 'Evangeline,' I suppose."

"Yes, and then 'The Lady of la Garaye,' and 'Guinevere,' the last of the Idylls, the most beautiful of my three favourites perhaps, though I like 'Evangeline' the best. I should

like to have these three poems bound together for my own particular self."

"Well, if you are very good, as we say to children," Edgar said, laughing, "come next St. Margaret's Day, I might perhaps, at a heavy pecuniary sacrifice, manage to produce that volume."

"Oh, that will be too charming!" After a pause she said, "I am glad we are going to rest a whole day at San Remo. I am sure you are very tired, though you will not say so."

He was indeed, very tired and not feeling well; but energy with him supplied always the place of strength. Towards five o'clock they reached the large old-fashioned inn in the centre of the picturesque city of San Remo, and had just time before dark to walk to the end of the jetty, from whence there is a beautiful view of the town and the amphitheatre of hills behind it. They sat there, looking at the port full of little fishing and trading vessels, and animated by the variety of costumes which gives such life to Italian scenery. Then they strolled through the narrow streets, admiring the palaces, equal in some instances in size and magnifice tonce

those of Genoa, and going in and out of the numerous fine churches, which exhibit, like most of those on the Riviera, a splendour of decoration which takes travellers by surprise.

"Is it not a perfect mystery," Edgar exclaimed, as his wife led the way to a narrow bridge across a torrent edged by cactuses and aloes, "how the inhabitants of small secluded towns, at a time when they had none of the modern resources we possess, should have been able to convey up steep ascents and along narrow, precipitous pathways the materials for such buildings and all the wonderful treasures of art they contain."

"Where there is a will there is a way, I suppose," Ita said; "and I should think they cared *immensely* to have beautiful churches. But now look at the palm-trees on the Piazza!"

Edgar looked, admired as much as she wished, and then they went home.

The next day, after a good night's rest, feeling refreshed, though not perhaps in quite as high spirits as when they had started on their journey, they prepared to

ascend the long stony ascent which leads to the Leper's Hospital, a charitable foundation and relic of old times, due to the Knights of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus. Alas! that the names of those saints, the badge of that Christian order, should be profaned as it is in our days!

When they came out of this building, where everything is indeed done to soften the misery of the most afflicted, perhaps, of all God's creatures, but where the sufferings humanity is exposed to are painfully conspicuous, it was a relief to breathe the pure and soft air, and ascend higher still to the magnificent sanctuary so called, *par excellence*, which in the midst of its grand terraces, adorned with cypresses and statues, and at the head of its broad flights of steps, commands one of the loveliest views of the whole coast, from Nice to Genoa.

"What a strange inequality there is in human destinies!" Ita said, when, after looking into the church, they wandered into the grove of ilexes at its back. "Here we are, enjoying ourselves as much as is possible, travelling together through this

beautiful country, loath to leave each lovely spot we come to, and yet, on the whole, longing for the day when we shall turn our faces towards our own dear home—only sorry that time and space do not allow us to combine two sorts of happiness, two different kinds of lives in one; and *there* are those poor creatures, with no hope of cure, no prospect of change, day after day spent in lonely, loathsome sufferings. . . . . Oh! how can people who do not believe in a future state of existence help going mad with the thought of the inequality in human destinies!"

"I believe there is less of it than you imagine. There is such a large amount of secret suffering in this world, especially of that which arises from peculiar constitutions of mind or of body."

"But sometimes all miseries seem to come together."

"Not often, I think. My idea is that God does not send to any one the trial that to their peculiar nature would be most unbearable. Sorrows, seen at a distance, appear to approach that point, but somehow or

other, they do not arrive at it. Suffering seems always to stop short of what would be overwhelming."

"I never read Marie Antoinette's history without wondering how she could live through her trials. What could have made them worse—more overwhelming?"

"Remorse."

"Ah; but remorse is not exactly a trial sent by God."

"In a certain sense I think it is. Remorse is not the same thing as repentance. To one person the thought that he had done another an injury, the remembrance of a mean or cruel act of sin, would be perfect torture; whereas another person might truly repent of having committed it, but not feel the keen suffering I speak of."

"If, for instance, you had acted as Mr. Neville did about his marriage, you would never have got over the misery it would have caused you."

"Perhaps those who could not get over having acted in a particular manner would never have been tempted to do so."

"Mr. Neville looks as if he had gone

through much suffering, but he seems happy now. What he could not have got over, I think, would have been if he had made his wife give up her religion for his sake, and then she had died unhappy."

"Yes, with his present convictions, that would have been very painful to him."

"One of the most terrible things, I think, that could happen to one would be to kill somebody by accident."

"Worse than on purpose?"

"Oh, but I am talking of things that could happen to one."

"I suppose we ought not to say of any crime that it is impossible we should commit it. As it is only God's grace, or the absence of temptation from our particular circumstances, which keeps us from falling into as bad sins as others."

Ita thought a little, and then said, "Well, I cannot conceive under any possible circumstances that I could kill anybody."

"Physically or morally speaking?"

"Both; I am too great a coward, and too tender-hearted."

"If you had been in Charlotte Corday's

place, and had seen in a list of people doomed to death by Marat, the names of the persons you loved most in the world, and that by stabbing him you believed you could save them, might you not have been *tempted* to do so?"

"Well, perhaps I should if your name had been on the list, and I could have saved you. I had not thought of such a possibility as that. Yes, I suppose I could have done it. I once saw a woman cruelly beating a little child. I think at that moment I could have flown at her and stabbed her."

"You see, Pussy, you are not quite as safe from that temptation as you fancied."

"I know what would be the worst thing of all to have done. It would be to have made somebody bad who was once good, or prevented anybody from doing what was right."

When Ita had said those last words, she blushed deeply. The thought crossed her mind that Edgar might think she alluded to his strenuous opposition to her becoming under any circumstances a Catholic. But she need not have been afraid. He was always so firmly persuaded that whatever he did was

right, that the idea of a misgiving on that point had never even occurred to him.

As they were walking back, and passing by a little shrine with an image of the Blessed Virgin, Ita ventured—it was a habit of her childhood—to lay a bunch of wild flowers she had gathered on the wayside altar.

"Will you have these?" Edgar said, offering her some white hyacinths to add to her nosegay. She was pleased, and to please him she repeated as they went on the lines in the "Christian Year"—

> "Ave Maria, Blessed Maid,
> Lily of Eden's fragrant shade!
> Ave Maria, thou whose name
> All but adoring love may claim."

To quote Keble's poetry was like a profession of faith in Anglicanism. He smiled, and no cloud obscured their enjoyment of that day. He had lost his apprehensions. She had stifled her misgivings. There was a truce at any rate between them and her soul, and thus she wrote that evening in her diary:—

"I have had only once to-day one of those thoughts that Edgar tells me to drive away as temptations. We laid flowers together at

the feet of the Blessed Virgin. There is great sympathy between us."

The following day was a Sunday, and this was her record of it—

"After breakfast this morning we walked outside the town. There is no English church here, and Edgar said nothing about going to another. After following the road some little time, we turned to the right, and went up a steep paved ascent which brought us to a villa which must have been once a very beautiful place. Now the terraces and what was once the garden are in a wild, neglected state, and the paintings on the walls outside nearly effaced. We opened a door and found ourselves in a little chapel, with two altars in it, and everything arranged with the greatest care. It looked as if it must have been once very much cared for—all the smallest details were so pretty. Edgar proposed to read the service there together as we were quite alone.

"I should have liked better to read it as we had intended out of doors in the wood. When I am in a Catholic church I find it so difficult to pray without thinking of what I must not think of. I cannot bear to see him

pass before the altar without kneeling, when I know the blessed Sacrament is there. He used to do so when we first came abroad. He says now he cannot make out if it is present or not in foreign churches, and he seems annoyed when I tell him.

"Afterwards we strolled for two or three hours in the shade, for the sun was hot, and we were on the side of a hill quite sheltered from the wind. The wild flowers were beautiful, and the views on each side of us charming. San Remo has not the grand purple mountains or the bright look of Mentone, but it is more like what I can fancy from prints and pictures that Southern Italy must be. It has more streams, and archways, and shrines, and the people look wilder and darker. It makes me think more of past times. There is a ruined tower on the opposite side of the valley where we were, which looked as if a story belonged to it. The man who has charge of the villa with the chapel, told us it was called the Torre di Sapia; he said the Sapias and the Borias—the Marchese Boria is his *padrone* — were the two principal families in San Remo. I wonder if there

ever were a Romeo and a Juliet who only met on Sundays at Mass in that little chapel, but could see each other's windows across the valley. I am sure there must have been some romance or legend connected with that old tower. There is not a pine or a cypress about it that does not look as if it had a tale to tell.

"Just as we were thinking of walking back, the bell of the chapel rang, and Edgar proposed to attend the service. I am glad we did. The way of the Cross is such a beautiful devotion, and these poor peasants are so pious and good. He seemed pleased, and we knelt like everybody else at Benediction. I asked him if we could have stations at Holmwood. He always likes me to make that sort of remark. 'In time, perhaps,' he said. Ah me! I must give one more look at the Boria Palace, the orange-trees, and the palms in the moonlight, and then go to bed. I wish the Italian pillows were not so like stones, and the mattresses did not rustle when you lie down!* I must not lie awake to-night thinking of what I heard from the

* At that time, San Remo had not reached the height of civilization with all its attendant luxuries, which it has now attained.

priest at Colla. If I did what I wish, I should try to see him again to-morrow, but Edgar would not like it; and he is so good on that subject, that I must not annoy him about it. If I should ever discover that I am that poor woman's daughter, he would make me do exactly what I ought. I can trust him entirely. He is more to me than any husband ever was to a wife, for I have no one else in the world but him. I belonged to no one till he took me to be his own."

The bells of San Ciro began to ring as church bells are apt to do in Italy, at all sorts of unexpected hours. Ita laid down to rest, but the sound kept her awake, and thoughts would come into her mind which she kept off in the day, but that haunted her often in the silent hours of the night. Almost unconsciously she murmured, "O Church of all lands! O true and mighty mother! One, holy, Catholic, Apostolic! Meet mother for one who never knew an earthly parent or a native land! Why cannot I, why ought I not to belong to you?"

CHAPTER IX.

When, after three days' journey under less favourable circumstances than before, as a change in the weather had set in, and rain and wind succeeded to dust and sunshine, Edgar and Ita found themselves again at Mentone, the first thing they saw on the drawing-room table of the villa were English visiting cards.

"Only think of Lady Emma and Mr. Lorton being here!" Ita exclaimed. "I hope they have not left, and that we shall see them."

She had cared very little to set eyes on that couple when they were staying within a few miles of the Vicarage. But it was different abroad. There is an excitement and pleasure in meeting English acquaintances in a foreign country, whom at home we should

never have thought of going out of our way to seek. Cold as we often are to one another, sympathy with those whose mother-tongue compatriots with our own, lies very deep in our hearts. Edgar looked delighted, and said, "I should have gone at once to see if they are still at the hotel, but I am so tired!"

He looked pale and exhausted, and threw himself on the sofa as if hardly able to hold up his head.

"Shall *I* go? But it is almost dinner-time. We ordered it at six, you know. But I can send a note. Perhaps they would come here this evening. When people are travelling, they often do not mind a little additional moving about."

She accordingly wrote this note:—

"Dear Lady Emma,—We are just this moment returned from a journey on foot and donkey-back along the Corniche. If you are not as tired as we are, perhaps you would pay us a little visit this evening. It would give us so much pleasure to see you and hear all your English news. If you are not inclined to come out so late, we shall

try to find you to-morrow, immediately after breakfast, unless you would, indeed, breakfast with us at ten.—Yours sincerely,

"Margarita Derwent."

When they were half way through their dinner, Ita's little messenger returned and brought a verbal answer. The Signore and the Signora would come between eight and nine o'clock. She liked showing the villa to their English friends, and made a few changes in the room to set it off to advantage, and even slipped out to gather some roses, heliotrope, and geranium, with which she made a wonderful bouquet for the time of year. On the red Genoa table-cover, with the light of the lamp shining upon it, her flowers looked beautiful. It was provoking that the night was rather dark, so that it was not of much use to open the blinds—shutters there were none—in order to exhibit the view. Still the sea and the few lights here and there in the town were visible. She could not have fancied beforehand that a visit from Lady Emma Lorton could have given her so much pleasure.

"Do not, please, fidget about so much, darling," her husband said, "I feel very sleepy; and put a shade over the lamp, it hurts my eyes."

He leant back in the arm-chair, and closed them with a look of pain. Ita saw that he shivered. "I am sure he has caught cold," she thought, with that sinking of heart which those who watch a person in delicate health know so well. The previous day had been one of ceaseless rain, a hopeless drenching downpouring from morning to night, which, when it does rain in Italy, is generally the case. They had not left Bordighiera half-an-hour before it began. She knew he was over-fatigued with walking, and might, therefore, all the more easily have caught a chill. Now she almost wished they had not asked the Lortons to come. She tried to read, but could not do anything but watch Edgar, who was leaning back in his chair half-asleep, but coughed now and then and looked flushed.

Soon after eight o'clock the door-bell rang; it was not, however, the English travellers, but Mr. Neville, who was asking if they were at home. When he came

in, Edgar roused himself and talked about their excursion. When that subject was exhausted, he said, "I suppose you know the Lortons. We were surprised to find they were here. They are coming to see us this evening."

"I met them at Grantley Manor last autumn. Then they were the people I saw in the street to-day. I could not make out their faces, they passed so quickly, but I was sure they were English."

Edgar was a little annoyed that the Lortons should happen to find Mr. Neville with them. He knew Lady Emma thought he went *too far* in some things, and had very unjustly accused him of Romanizing tendencies. A foreign Abbé would not have signified, but to find an English Roman Catholic priest, a convert, too, on familiar terms with them, might rather strengthen that impression. There was no help for it, however, and in a short time the bell rang again, and this time Lady Emma and her husband appeared.

The meeting was much more warm and cordial on both sides than it would have been if they had fallen in with each other in

England. The two ladies actually kissed each other. At the first moment Lady Emma did not recognize Mr. Neville; but when he was named she shook hands with him, and asked if he had heard lately from Mrs. Walter Sydney. After they had answered all the usual questions about their journey, and said they were on their way to Rome, and going to start early the next day, Edgar asked them if they were pleased with Mentone.

"It is very pretty," Lady Emma said, "the scenery is lovely; but I cannot imagine how you can live here. There must be such a want of interest and occupation."

"Of course there is," Edgar replied; "but unfortunately Mr. Neville and I are both condemned to rest."

"The climate has done Edgar good," Ita said.

Lady Emma looked at him, and answered, "I should not say he looked better than he did in England. Hardly as well, I think."

"That is only because he is very tired today," Ita replied.

"It is a mistake coming abroad for

health," Edgar said; "what is gained in one way is lost in another."

"The people seem dreadfully poor here," Mr. Lorton observed. "It is shocking to see women turned into beasts of burden."

"And the begging!" Lady Emma exclaimed. "It is disgusting to be asked for sous by every child you meet."

"Do you really think the begging here as bad as that of the London beggars?" Ita asked. "It is such a good-humoured sort of thing. If Edgar threatens them in play they run away laughing; and it is only very old people and children who beg here. In London it is so dreadful to see those half naked, crouching, shivering creatures, shuffling along the streets, and speaking with that peculiar whine they all have. Oh, Lady Emma, how can you think anything here as bad?"

"You must know that my wife is fanatical about Menton e," Edgar said.

"London beggars are dreadful," Mr. Lorton observed; "but then nobody in his senses ever gives to them."

"These people live in such shocking

places," Lady Emma said. "On our way to the cemetery I saw some of the places they inhabit; dens, only fit for beasts."

"As far as that goes," Edgar said, "I suspect that your standard of comparison is the average of cottages on your father's or Mr. Lorton's estates. If you had been used, as I have, to the dwellings of the poor in St. Giles's or the Borough, you would not, perhaps, be quite as much shocked with the places they live in here. In point of misery I would back London against any part of the world I have ever been in. They have to work, no doubt, very hard here to live; but there is employment for every one, great industry, and the most remarkable purity of morals. I have heard that from you, Mr. Neville, and others also."

"Yes; early marriages and religious principles have that effect here, just as they have also in Ireland."

"But early, imprudent marriages are what we strongly deprecate," Mr. Lorton said.

"Then you must accept the consequences of discouraging them. Of course, in an

over-populated country, what is natural and right in itself becomes difficult. But I have no business to praise the Mentonese before Mrs. Derwent. She is eloquent on the subject of the virtues and modesty of the women and girls here, and she knows them better than I do."

"They are as good as bread!" Ita exclaimed, with more earnestness than eloquence.

"Of course, we expect to find in a small place like this," Lady Emma said, "greater morality than in large towns. It is fortunate they are good, for they seem very dirty and ignorant."

"Dirty!" Ita indignantly exclaimed. "I assure you it is no such thing. If you sit in the midst of the poorest crowd at San Michele . . . ."

"Oh, come," Edgar exclaimed, "you are going too far in your defence."

"I must come to Mrs. Derwent's assistance," Mr. Neville said.

"I will back the cleanliness of a Mentonese congregation against that of a London one, composed of poor people."

"But in London who would think of going to such a church?" Mr. Lorton observed.

"If you were here on a Sunday, Lady Emma," Ita said, "you would see all the women and girls in their neat petticoats and jackets, their hair so nicely done, with a flower stuck behind the ear, instead of those ragged shawls and bonnets out of shape, that look as if they had been picked up in the gutter, which poor people wear in England."

"Well, I am glad to hear it. You must know better than I do. I only speak of my impressions."

"But why do you think them so ignorant?"

"I have asked several of the children if they could read, and they say, no."

"Nor ever will, I expect," Edgar said, "till they are annexed to France, which, it is supposed, will be the case some day. Not that I think they understand your questions, Lady Emma. For they speak neither French nor Italian. My wife has it all her own way here, for she chatters with them in their dialect, and then reports that all they say is

right and charming. But I do believe they are well instructed in their religion."

"That is what I mean," Ita said. "They are not ignorant in that way, though they cannot read. You would never find here anyone who had not heard of God or of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they can all say the Our Father and the Hail Mary."

"That is all very well as far as it goes," Lady Emma said, "except of course . . . ."

She did not finish her sentence, out of civility to Mr. Neville.

"But it is very sad they cannot read. There is not a child in our village that does not go to school."

"On your own estates?" Mr. Neville asked.

"Yes, and all those I have ever had to do with. I give up London. I am perfectly aware that there is dreadful vice and misery there, but in the country . . . ."

"Well, but in the country? S. G. O.'s letters give a melancholy picture of the state of morality in the rural districts and villages of his part of England. The agricultural districts, as a whole, are not, according to

his account, superior in that respect to the towns."

"He is a very eccentric person, and rather given to exaggerate," Lady Emma answered with a heightened colour.

"Should you say Lord Shaftesbury's statements as to the moral and religious condition of the poorer classes in England were to be depended upon?"

"I would not vouch for their correctness. But I see what you are driving at, Mr. Neville, and, as I like plain speaking, I will answer what I know is your thought. You wish to prove that secluded places where the people are ignorant—like here, for instance, or in Ireland—remain free from vice when they belong to the Catholic Church, whereas, if abandoned to Protestantism, they become wicked."

"I would not speak in so strong or so general a manner as that, Lady Emma. I believe that there are countries where Protestantism prevails—Sweden, for instance—where, amongst the poor purity of life still exists, and faith in some of the principal doctrines of Christianity."

"I have no sympathy," Lady Emma rejoined, "with Protestantism. It has impeded, for many generations, the work of our National Church, and prevented the beneficial effects it would have produced on our poorer classes had it been allowed free scope. It is an incubus which the Church of England is gradually shaking off, and we are beginning to reap the benefits of the revival amongst us of a pure Catholicism. I am quite willing to allow that your Church does a great deal of good abroad, though you must not be angry if I say that travelling on the Continent does not incline one to join your communion, if indeed such a thought could ever enter the mind of an Anglo-Catholic."

"In what way would it militate against such an inclination?" Mr. Neville asked.

Edgar and Ita were listening eagerly to this conversation. Mr. Lorton, who did not take so much interest as he appeared to do before his marriage in the subjects which occupied his wife, took up "Galignani's Messenger" with a look of resignation which expressed, "We are in for it now."

"Do you wish me to speak frankly?"

"Certainly."

"Then, in the first instance, the way in which so many of the shops in France are open on Sundays, and the workmen being employed as usual, is very shocking."

"Is that, do you think, the fault of the Roman Catholic Church? There is an association composed both of priests and laymen for the express purpose of promoting the better observance of Sunday."

"Oh, really! But there ought to be laws, as with us, to enforce it."

"That would depend on the government and the nation, not on the Church."

"But if the bishops were really to interest themselves in the matter, and to petition the government on the subject—the Bishop of Orleans, for instance, whom they say is such an influential person, such a great preacher—they would obtain it."

Edgar, who knew a little more of the state of France than Lady Emma, could not help smiling.

Mr. Neville answered, "I have no doubt the Bishop would gladly try to obtain from

the French Government, that at any rate the public works of the country should not be carried on on Sunday, but there would be as little chance of his succeeding as there would be of Cardinal Wiseman obtaining from Parliament that the days of obligation in our Church should be observed like Sunday."

"Then I never saw anything so slovenly as the way in which some of your services are conducted. The boys who serve at Mass are sometimes so ragged, and I have seen them laugh and look about them. Really, Mr. Neville, it is difficult to imagine that they are taught to believe in the doctrine of the Real Presence!"

"Is it not very difficult, also, to conceive that we are all taught, and do believe that we are constantly and at all times in the presence of Almighty God. A person who was told, for the first time, that this is an article of our creed, might express, I think, the same surprise if he watched even good people at every moment of their lives."

"Ah, but when engaged in an act of religious worship, children should learn to be reverent."

"They certainly ought; but if you are scandalized at their negligence and inattention at times, have you not, on the other hand, been touched at seeing little children coming by themselves into church to say an unbidden prayer, and the devout way in which they kiss a crucifix or a holy picture?"

"I have not happened to see that. I can, of course, only observe what comes under my notice. But there are other things too. There is such an absence of truth in Catholic countries!"

"Is there? A special one in Catholic countries?"

"Yes; it meets you everywhere. We had ordered the other day a carriage, one of the few that are to be found here. It never came, and the coachman said a Mrs. Ramwood, who is at the hotel, had gone out in it, and kept him out beyond the time we had named. But I asked her about it, and it turned out that she had not been out in it at all."

Edgar did not quite like this form of attack on the Catholic Church, and Mr. Neville said quite gravely—

"It is just possible that this coachman may not have been a Catholic, though I do not mean by that to imply that Catholics never tell lies nor make false excuses."

"Of course I know nothing about the man; and I do not say it proves anything—only it is the sort of thing one meets with abroad."

"And never in England?"

"Ah! but there is this difference—we do what is wrong, but we do not pretend it is right. We do not compound for sins as you do. We do not think we can make up for them by almsgiving."

"And you suppose we are allowed to do so?"

"You say alms cover a multitude of sins."

"It is the Bible that says so."

"But you attach a particular meaning to those words."

"Yes, we certainly do."

"Now, I had a French maid when I first married—a Roman Catholic. She was not at all over-particular about honesty. I do not say she was positively dishonest, but she

went very near the mark. Taking money from tradespeople, and all that sort of thing. Well, she often gave money in charity, and I have no doubt she thought she made up in that way for her want of strict honesty."

"Did she tell you so?"

"No; but that is just the Roman Catholic spirit."

"My dear Lady Emma, you prove your assertion by the statement of a fact, and then support that fact by repeating your assertion. If it was impossible for a person to restore money which they had defrauded another person of, the best atonement in their power might then be to give it to the poor; but if restitution was practicable, they would be bound to make it; and under no circumstances would they go on cheating others, and suppose they were making up for it by giving alms. If they made sincere confessions, they would be told so. I have often had to restore money to persons who had been defrauded of it, when those who have confessed to me have acknowledged their sin. At the same time, I must say that it was better for this dishonest maid of yours

to have given what she did in alms, than to have spent it in other ways—on her dress, for instance. It did not lessen her sin, but perhaps the prayers of those she relieved might have obtained for her the grace of repentance."

"I do not say she was positively, really dishonest."

"Then, if you have any doubt on the subject, she may be supposed to have had some herself, and if so, we may charitably hope she gave alms with a good conscience."

"Still I cannot help thinking that Roman Catholics who lead bad lives often give alms as a sort of set-off."

"No Catholic could think that alms-giving would absolve him from the guilt of sin unrepented of and persevered in; but if he was sinning from weakness, from inability to resist temptation, he might hope, as I said just now, that alms might win him the grace to overcome his passions."

"It disgusts one to see people do wrong, and then give themselves the merit of charity."

"And is it only among Catholics that

you see it? Have not Protestants, whose names were foremost in all subscription lists —men who built chapels and supported Bible Societies—by their dishonesty, not cheated one individual, but plunged into ruin and despair hundreds and hundreds of helpless persons who had thought their names and their reputation a sufficient guarantee for implicit confidence?"

"Those men must have been simply dreadful hypocrites, and have had no religion at all."

"I would not venture to assert it. They may have had a vague idea of compensating by acts of munificence for their reckless conduct towards their victims."

"I suppose you think," Edgar said, "that we are rather inclined, as a nation, to see the mote in our neighbour's eye, and to overlook it in our own?"

"Not exactly to overlook it. What surprises me, on the contrary, is the way in which our public press, and Englishmen in general, while on the one hand they expose in unmeasured terms the social miseries and moral evils at home, on the other hand

assume towards other nations the tone, not merely of lords of humankind, as Goldsmith called them, but of its models and guides, and preach to others as if we presented the most perfect pattern of public and domestic virtue. Thundering articles in the 'Times' and other newspapers proclaim to the world that the state of London is disgraceful, that Hyde Park cannot be crossed with safety after dark, and that women are attacked by sturdy beggars even in the privileged region of Belgravia; that, on an average, four hundred persons disappear in London every year, who are never heard of again; that the number of infants murdered nightly is too startling to state; and that daring robberies are committed in mid-day in our streets. And then if, the next day, the correspondent from Rome, for instance, writes that it is not safe to drive to Frascati, or that an Englishman has been robbed of his watch in a hotel at Rome, there is an outburst of indignation against the Pope's Government. 'What a dreadful state of things!' 'How can it be suffered to exist?' and so on."

"But everybody admits," Mr. Lorton

exclaimed, "that the Papal Government *is* the worst in Europe."

"So far from its being generally admitted, I could bring a number of unprejudiced witnesses to the contrary. I am convinced that a person who would go into the question fairly, and examine into the physical and moral condition of the inhabitants of Rome and of London, would give a verdict in favour of the first. I am not speaking now of the preference which any one may have for one form of government over another. I have heard that when one of our most eminent statesmen was asked, on his return from Italy, 'Well, are you converted? Have you seen a miracle?' that he answered, 'I am not converted, but I have seen a miracle—a people perfectly happy under what we consider the worst government in the world.' In everything that relates to the treatment of the poor, Rome can challenge comparison with any city in Europe. Its prisons are admirably managed. Even in the last century, when ours were in a deplorable state, Howard, the philanthropist, as he is called, found the Roman ones well and humanely governed."

"I cannot believe," Edgar said, "that the union of the spiritual and temporal power can be favourable to religion."

"That is a separate question again, and though I have a very decided opinion myself on that point, I will not argue about it at this moment. What I am contending for is simple equity. What I ask is, that a robbery in Rome, or a murder, should not be considered as a proof that the Pope's Government is a bad one, and the Roman population in a discontented, disaffected state, when similar events elsewhere do not lead to the same conclusions."

"But it is such a tyrannical Government," Lady Emma exclaimed. "The other day, when we were in Paris, Lady Charlotte Rosebank told us, that last winter, in Rome, she was complaining to Cardinal Antonelli that her hotel-keeper had charged her outrageously, and then been very impertinent. His Eminence said, immediately, 'Why did not you let me know? We should have put the man into prison at once.'"

"I suspect," Mr. Neville said, "that if the story is true the Cardinal was guilty of a

jest, the point of which the lady did not perceive. Those who are loudest in the abuse of tyranny in the abstract, are sometimes suspected of not being sorry to have it exercised in their behalf. A government may be arbitrary and not at all tyrannical—the terms are not synonymous."

"I agree with you there," Edgar said. "Great injustices are often perpetrated without any deviation from the letter of the law. But to return to my great objection; I cannot reconcile in my mind the worldly pomp of the Court of Rome with my ideas of Apostolical simplicity."

"But there is not a prince in the world whose own mode of living is so simple and economical as the Pope's. As far as worldly pomp goes I cannot understand that those who do not object to the Anglican bishops living in palaces, to their wives driving about in smart carriages, and their children inheriting large fortunes, should take exception at the splendour of the Vatican, combined as it has generally been with a very great austerity and simplicity of life in most of the popes."

"Whatever may be said on that point,"

Mr. Lorton said, "our strong feeling about religious liberty must always make us look with dislike on the Papal Government."

"There again," Mr. Neville exclaimed; "there is one of those popular delusions prevalent I maintain in England. One would think, by the tone always assumed on that subject, that the most perfect liberty and equality about religion existed under the British Government in particular, and in Protestant countries generally; whereas, in the first case, we are only slowly progressing towards it even in theory, and practically poor persons who are not Protestants, paupers and prisoners especially, have still to suffer much hardship and injustice on account of their religion. As to Sweden, Denmark, and some of the smaller States of Germany, their laws against liberty of conscience are far more stringent and rigorous than in any Catholic country; yet bigotry and intolerance are always spoken of as connected with Catholicism and not with Protestantism."

"But you cannot really mean that Protestants, and especially English Protestants,

have not been the most strenuous supporters of religious liberty at home and abroad."

"For themselves and their co-religionists certainly. But I appeal to the history of Ireland. Has religious liberty existed there? does religious equality, without which liberty can hardly be said to be a reality, even now exist there?"

"I am so tired," Lady Emma cried, "of hearing Ireland always brought forward against us."

The colour rose in Mr. Neville's face, and he answered nothing, for he felt that had he spoken at all it would have been too warmly.

She suddenly recollected he was Irish, and was sorry she had said what she had. "Of course," she added, "there were dreadful persecutions in past times, and I should never wish to defend them."

"I am the last person in the world," Mr. Neville said, with a quivering lip, "who ought to attack persecutors, but the fatal experience I have had of the results of Protestant ascendency and pride in Ireland, make me shudder when I think of them.

But having come here only to inquire after Mr. and Mrs. Derwent's health after their journey, I have stayed beyond my usual hour."

"Do not look at the clock," Ita said, "it partakes of the general ignorance at Mentone about hours. Clocks never tell, and nobody knows here, what o'clock it is."

"I really ought to have been at home long ago," Mr. Neville answered, and got up to go away.

Lady Emma, as well as the Derwents, shook hands with him, and when he had left the room, she said, "He is very pleasing, so gentleman-like and refined. One can understand his having been very attractive in his youth, though not handsome. But Roman Catholics are always on the defensive. You cannot find fault with anything abroad without their immediately beginning to attack England. It is so unpatriotic. I have always observed that English converts lose all affection for their own country."

"Oh, Lady Emma, do you think so?" Ita exclaimed. "Mr. Walter Sydney and his wife are such thorough John Bulls."

"I suppose," Edgar said with a smile,

"that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones."

"But I do not like their picking up the stones to throw them at us."

"It is a disagreeable mode of argument, certainly, but a tempting one."

Ita had felt all the evening as if she would very much like to throw a small stone, that would not have hurt her much, at Lady Emma's head. She was so angry at her speech about Ireland. To a generous nature there is nothing more revolting than sneers at those who have suffered at our hands. She was glad that Edgar changed the subject by saying, "But now do tell us some news. Have you been lately at Carsdale?"

"Yes, just before we left England, and to Holmwood one day. I saw Miss Derwent about three weeks ago."

"Looking as well as usual?"

"Yes, the picture of health. She takes a great deal of exercise now. Since you have been away she goes more amongst the poor people, I fancy."

"I felt sure she would," Ita said.

"I am delighted to hear it," Edgar

rejoined. "It almost comforts me for being away. It will be so good both for them and for herself. Did you see Mrs. Gerald?"

"No; from what Miss Derwent says, I should be afraid she must be in a sadly nervous state. The least thing agitates her. It is lucky your cousin does not know what nerves are, for living alone with a person in that state must be very depressing. She took me to see your house; she is making some alterations in the kitchen-garden, adding a piece of land to it on one side, and on the other making a connecting-link, as she calls it, between the useful and the agreeable, that is, the flowers and the vegetables. I think it will be very pretty. I hope it was not meant as a surprise; if so, you must pretend not to have heard anything about it."

"I am sure she is arranging a sunny corner," Ita observed. "You said one day that every kitchen-garden ought to have a sunny corner for common flowers."

"Yes; I remember our talking about it. Annie delights in gardening."

"I never in my life saw anybody work so

hard. And she carries such weights on her head. It is so absurd. That is her great amusement just now. You mentioned in one of your letters that the women here have extraordinarily strong necks, and carry weights which no ordinary person could lift up. So she practises this art or feat, and loads a washerwoman's basket with a lot of things, which she brings in that way from her garden to yours. She insisted on my trying. I could not keep what she had been carrying for a minute on my head, which made her laugh. What a grown-up child she is."

"Yes; she has the simplicity of a child, with the good sense of a woman."

"Does she sometimes see the sisters?"

"I have not heard, but I should doubt her going there often now. I suppose you have heard the report about the Rolands?"

"No; he wrote to me some time ago, and said he should have to tell me soon of something that would, he feared, give me pain. I thought he had perhaps been offered another living. If it was a good one, I should be glad, though very sorry for ourselves."

"It is said that he is on the point of joining the Church of Rome."

Ita was frightened at the expression of suffering which came over her husband's face. He had been looking ill all the evening, but now he was quite white.

"Roland! Roland of all people!" he ejaculated.

"It is a perfect infatuation," Lady Emma said. "They have not a penny in the world. One child, and another coming. And then it is so wrong—so peculiarly wrong in one who has seemed so deeply alive to his sacred obligations. I was perfectly thunderstruck when I heard it from what I fear was good authority."

Mr. Lorton got up and warmed his hands at the fire. He no longer exactly re-echoed his wife's opinions, as in the time of his courtship, and came out occasionally with remarks by no means agreeable to her.

"They will all end in that way," he said, "those High Church people. It passes my comprehension how in these days anybody can be such a fool as to become a Catholic. I consider it simply as a proof of imbecility.

But clever people are such fools. They ruin everything."

Ita could hardly help smiling. Lady Emma did not smile, and said in a severe manner: "That is not the way to look at the subject. It is a sin, not merely a folly, to leave the Church of our baptism."

"I cannot believe it of Roland," Edgar exclaimed. "And his wife—what of her?"

"She is laid up on the sofa, expecting her confinement."

"But, I mean, is she also shaken in her allegiance to our Church?"

"Oh, I suppose so. I did not hear her particularly mentioned. The Rolands were spoken of as about to become Roman Catholics."

"I wonder if it is true?" Ita ejaculated.

"He will write to me, of course, before he takes any decisive step," Edgar said. "I thought they neither of them looked as happy this year as they might have done."

"I cannot imagine what is to become of them," Lady Emma said. "I knew you would be shocked. They were so near you at Holmwood, and were doing so much good among the poor at Bramblemoor."

Ita felt the news very much. In some way almost as much as her husband. Conversions to the Catholic from the Anglican Church had hitherto generally been rather a subject of secret rejoicing to her, but then none had ever touched her so nearly as this. Since her marriage she had become very much attached to Eliza. They had had a common work and interest, and Bramblemoor was very near her heart. Whatever sympathy or spiritual consolation she had ever derived from the services of the Church of England, were connected with that place. It was not the same thing at Holmwood. There she had known the greatest possible happiness of another sort, but at Bramblemoor her soul had for the first time received strong religious impressions, and her distant, humble, reverential affection for Edgar, at a time when she did not dream that it would meet with requital, gave something sweet as well as sacred to those recollections. It was very sad to think of Eliza's departure; and it seemed as if with the Rolands another prop was giving way in her own faith in the Anglican Church.

At the same time, for her emotions were not logical—if indeed the two words can ever be used in juxtaposition—she was conscious of a strong sympathy with the step they were about to take. It was like seeing friends emigrating to another land; like standing on the shore, and watching them embark; she bade them mentally Godspeed, but it was with a heavy heart.

Edgar was so painfully engrossed with this piece of intelligence that he could hardly reply to Mr. Lorton's comments on the articles he had been studying in "Galignani's Messenger." Ita had taken Lady Emma to the window to look at the view. A break in the clouds had given the moon an opportunity of throwing a stormy light on the rough sea, and the town was visible beyond the dark masses of olive wood. After admiring it for an instant, Lady Emma said, "How ill your husband looks! How can you let him take such long walks, and over-fatigue himself so dreadfully. He is one of our most valuable men; so Catholic in everything, and at the same time such a thorough Anglican. You really must take

more care of him. Miss Derwent says she is so afraid his eyes will get worse if his general weakness increases."

To be lectured by Lady Emma about taking care of Edgar, and to be told of Annie's anxiety, as if any solicitude could equal her own, was so irritating that Ita could not answer. She pressed her forehead against the glass of the window, and said nothing.

"I see he is quite cut up about the Rolands. After doing so much for them as he has, it must be a great disappointment. I never liked them very much; I had always a misgiving that there was something unsteady about him. Rather a weak mind; not a sort of person one felt confidence in. Miss Derwent is more vexed about it than can be described. She said that a great annoyance of that sort might make Mr. Derwent positively ill. She could not imagine anything he would mind more. Do you not think so?" she asked, observing that Ita made no reply.

"Edgar is not well this evening," she answered. "I am afraid he has caught cold."

"Then I am sure we ought to leave you. The best thing will be for him to go to bed early. I hope you do not let him write at night. Miss Derwent says he hurts his eyes so much in that way."

Ita felt her heart swelling; she did not say that when he was too restless to sleep, she often sat by his side writing for him, till her fingers ached and her head throbbed, but she felt that if she was to see much of Lady Emma, she should find it difficult to endure her, and that she might even make her dislike Annie. Dislike Annie! Could it be possible, she asked herself, that such a thought had crossed her mind! Annie, to whom they owed everything.

At last Lady Emma told her husband that they must go, and with a kiss rather less cordial than the one with which they had greeted each other, the ladies parted. Edgar took a candle when they were gone, and left the room without making any remark on the news they had heard. He slept badly, and in the morning seemed feverish and ill.

END OF SECOND VOLUME.

F. BENTLEY AND CO., PRINTERS, SHOE LANE, FLEET STREET, LONDON.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

Form L9–10*m*-3,'48(A7920)444

THE LIBRARY
UNIV NIA

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
AA 000 373 669 1

SOLD BY
GEO. A. POYNDER.